

review

A PUBLICATION OF ILG

Phuket

ASIA'S FIELD OF DREAMS



IS **CUBA** READY
FOR TIMESHARING?

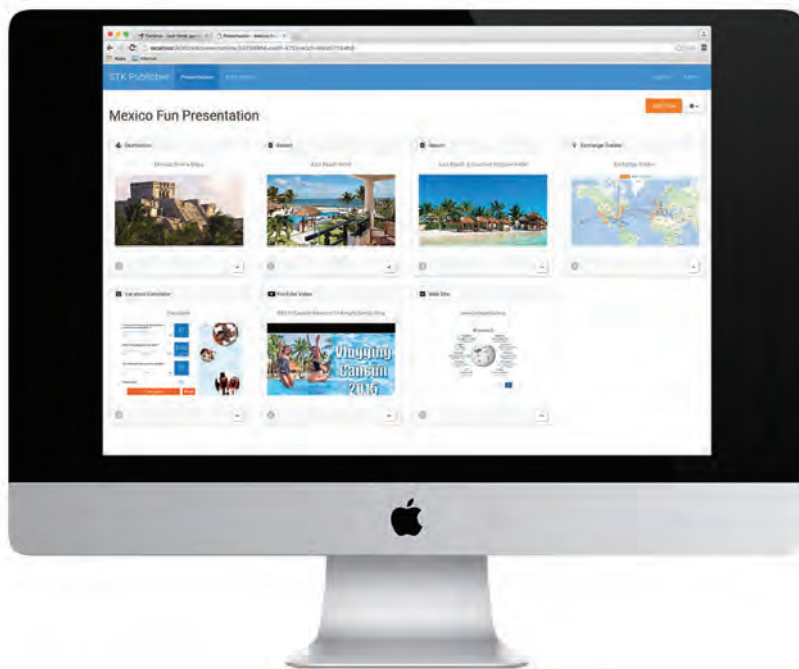
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**TRAVELERS WITH
DISABILITIES**

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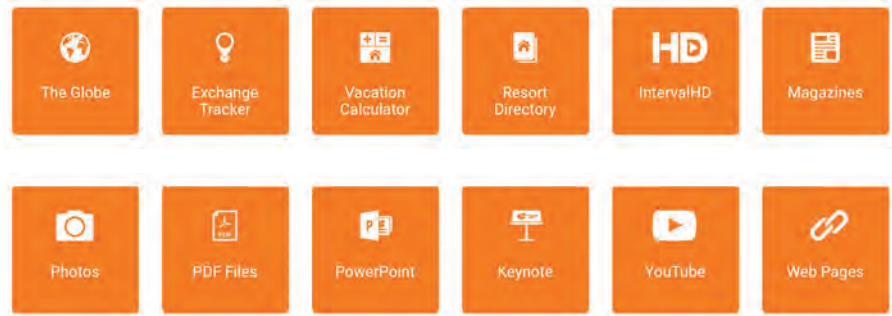


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BY
Craig M. Nash

CHAIRMAN,
PRESIDENT, AND CEO
ILG

We remain committed to teamwork and celebrating our successes with our valued clients; we continue to direct our passion and energy into innovating and challenging the status quo.

Street Cred

If you have a keen eye, you may have noticed that on the cover and other places in this issue of *Vacation Industry Review*, the name of our company is listed as ILG, rather than Interval Leisure Group. The corporate logo (see the masthead on the bottom of page 2) has also been updated.

What's up with the changes? The seemingly small refinements reflect a big-picture evolution for the company. It's all part of a rebranding effort that speaks to our growth and maturation over the past eight years. The initiative has involved a modification of the company name, a new logo, a dynamic new website, and the articulation of our commitment to our clients, owners, and guests into a powerful mission statement.

Where It All Began

When ILG was created in 2008 — as the result of a spinoff from our former parent company IAC — Interval International was virtually the entire business. Frequently referred to as — simply — “Interval,” the exchange company had been a familiar industry participant for more than 30 years. In order to retain continuity and remain recognizable to the exchange company's partners and business associates, we wanted our name to reflect the Interval connection.

In the last eight years, however, we've watched as the industry has undergone an evolution in which companies have consolidated and diversified. ILG, too, has experienced transformation and today serves as a leading provider of professionally delivered vacation experiences. We've assembled a portfolio of highly respected businesses through acquisitions and joint ventures, the latest of which represent the Hyatt, Sheraton, and Westin brands in vacation ownership. Our owners, members, and guests have access to an array of benefits and services, as well as world-class destinations through our international collection of resorts and clubs.

As such, we're taking the opportunity to reintroduce ourselves. We've evolved and grown, we've earned our street cred, we're well-established, and we're confident that our recognition is strong enough that Interval Leisure Group can stand as — simply — ILG.

More Than a Name

But the rebranding is more than a name and logo makeover. As part of the initiative, we also changed our Nasdaq ticker symbol from IILG to ILG, and we launched a new website with comprehensive information about the group, as well as our family of operating companies. The site brings to life our message, our mission — to make every leisure experience memorable — and our values.

We remain committed to teamwork and celebrating our successes with our valued clients; we continue to direct our passion and energy into innovating and challenging the status quo; we've pledged ourselves to a service culture that always goes above and beyond; and we're resolute that everything we do is carried out with integrity and excellence.

These, of course, have been values that have always guided the company — since the earliest days of Interval International. And as we draw near the end of the year-long observance of Interval's 40th anniversary, we at ILG and all seven of our operating businesses rededicate ourselves to the guiding principles that have helped earn the respect of our clients, owners, and guests, as well as Wall Street. **[]**

BRAND AND DELIVER



When you align your shared ownership resort with Preferred ResidencesSM, you benefit from the support of two powerful legacy brands while you maintain your property's distinct style.

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RESIDENCES

WHAT MEMBERS LOVE



Robert Harding/Image Source

Enhancing Owner Benefits With Space in High-Demand Urban Locations

A stay at a Washington, D.C., hotel room can easily go for US\$2,000 or more per week. As increasing numbers of vacationers are lured to bright lights and big-city attractions, affordable lodging options in the heart of the action are in hot demand.

Now, members of Interval International who are in pursuit of an urban escape have access to more of those appealing options than ever before. Interval has added 4,500 unit weeks of inventory at 18 properties in four of the world’s most popular urban destinations: Chicago, D.C., London, and Paris. Units range from studios to

two-bedrooms. What’s more, members who book these accommodations through Interval’s Getaways can expect to pay US\$150 less than customers who reserve them through other third-party entities.

“We know that sales teams at Interval-affiliated resorts promote our Getaways weeks as an added benefit of ownership, along with the exchange,” says David Gilbert, Interval’s president. “And with the growing interest in urban travel, this high-demand inventory is an attractive addition to the Interval value proposition. Owners are sure to appreciate the opportunity to vacation in these coveted locations.”

NEW AT INTERVAL

STK Publisher: The Easy Way to Create a Perfect Pitch

Interval International’s Sales Tool Kit keeps getting better.

The latest enhancement to the multipurpose program is STK Publisher, which makes putting together a sophisticated sales presentation that everyone on the sales team can use as simple as drag-and-drop; publish-and-share.

“STK Publisher allows sales team managers to build a custom presentation and control consistent messaging,” says Ralph Fiol, assistant vice president of digital innovation. “You can include all the components you know are key to making the sale, then you can send it to your entire team.”

STK Publisher’s easy-to-use web-based interface permits users to upload all the elements for a persuasive presentation, including PDFs, images, videos, and popular STK features such as the Interval Exchange Tracker and Vacation Calculator. Once the presentation is put together, it can be distributed to sales agents with a single click.

“STK Publisher is another example of Interval’s commitment to listening to our clients, and enhancing our Sales Tool Kit to help them achieve sales goals,” says Fiol. The STK iPad app can be downloaded at no cost from the Apple App Store.



DEVELOPER'S PICK

Interval STK Hits the Big Screen With Padzilla

With a monster-sized touch-screen display, it's easy to dazzle an audience and put the spotlight on a scintillating sales presentation. "All the bells and whistles and latest updates to the Interval Sales Tool Kit are impressive enough on an iPad," says Jan Wyatt, vice president of corporate marketing. "But put it on an 80-inch screen, and it brings the vacation possibilities to life."

The largest touch-screen iPad display available, Padzilla also comes in 40-, 55-, and 70-inch models — all of which are touch-compatible with Android, iOS, OSX, and Windows platforms. The various components of the Sales Tool Kit easily come together to build a show-stopping pitch. "Putting your presentation on Padzilla is bound to have a positive impact on sales," says Wyatt. "First, it's a conversation piece that helps break the ice. And when coupled with the STK components, it creates a very engaging interactive presentation."

For more information on incorporating Padzilla into your sales program, contact your Interval resort sales and service representative.



CRUISE NEWS



Best Price Guarantee

Now, Interval International members in North America and Latin America can take advantage of a Best Price Guarantee when they book their cruise vacations through Interval Travel®. If members find a qualifying lower rate for the same cruise either before they book or within 24 hours of booking, Interval Travel will match the lower rate. Conditions apply, such as the lower rate must be offered to the general public and must be for the same ship, sailing date, occupancy, cabin category, and itinerary.

AFFILIATIONS AND NEW BUSINESS

Interval International Affiliations

Caribbean Vacation Club at Turtle Cove Inn and Residences, located in Turks and Caicos, is currently being renovated and will offer studios and one- and two-bedroom units, with full kitchens and large private balconies. Planned amenities include a restaurant, a swimming pool, spa, fitness center, and rooftop cabanas with spectacular ocean views.

Terra & Mar Privilege, a new vacation club in eastern Brazil, offers units in the Pousada Terra & Mar hotel on the southern coast of Bahia. The resort has a swimming pool, restaurant, game room, and other amenities. Developer Rogerio Montes was involved in the hospitality industry in Bahia for nearly 15 years before adding a timeshare component at the boutique property.

Vacation Resorts International (VRI)

VRI has entered into property management agreements with **La Boca Casa** located in Boca Raton, Florida, and **Neptune House** on Block Island, Rhode Island. Services provided include budgeting, resort operations, rental programs, and owner communications, among others.

THE BUZZ FROM...

Jackie Ferreira, Director of Social Media, Interval International

When it comes to social media, do numbers matter? Yes — because numbers provide *social proof*. Online, this concept refers to the influence created when viewers see that lots of others are doing something or hold a certain belief. The numbers build the case that such actions or thoughts are worth emulating. With nearly a quarter-million profiles, 115,000 pieces of con-

tent, and 19,000-plus logins a month, our members-only forum — Community — is a place where more seasoned members educate newbies and share travel experiences. And on our Facebook page and other social media platforms, more than 10,000 likes is a sign of social proof. And social proof means our messages are building influence and credibility.



Info-Exchange Seminar Offers Inside Track

Interval International recently hosted an Info-Exchange Seminar at the Westin Dawn Beach Resort & Spa in Philipsburg, St. Maarten. More than 75 sales, marketing, and operations personnel from Interval-affiliated resorts received an overview of Interval's products, services, and digital platforms. Irania Arrindell, St. Maarten's Minister of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Traffic, and Telecommunication, as well as several St. Maarten Tourist Bureau officials, attended the event to learn about the latest timeshare industry trends.

David C. Gilbert, Interval's president, discussed the company's role in shared ownership in the Caribbean. Howard Nusbaum, president and CEO of the American Resort Development Association (ARDA), presented key findings from recent industry studies. Marcel J. Javois, featured speaker and president of the St. Maarten Timeshare

Association, provided an update on the local market and the status of legislative initiatives.

Other Interval presenters included Bryan Ten Broek, senior vice president of resort sales and marketing; Soraya Gonzales, assistant vice president of resort assistance; and Neil Kolton, director of resort sales and service for the Caribbean and Florida.

Interval hosted a reception at the nearby Oyster Bay Beach Resort's Infinity Restaurant and Bar to celebrate the company's 40th anniversary.

Cindy Clarke, reservations manager at Oyster Bay Beach Resort, counts the St. Maarten Info-Exchange as her fourth and claims that each event has been equally valuable. "In my experience, there is always something to learn. Interval is always adding to all that they already offer."

Another Info-Exchange Seminar is set for October 25, 2016, at the Eden Roc Miami Beach Resort & Spa in Miami Beach, Florida.



Howard Nusbaum, Marcel Javois, Soraya Gonzales, Bryan Ten Broek, Neil Kolton, and David Gilbert

Interval Sponsors Mexico's AMDETUR

Interval International was a diamond sponsor of the Mexican Resort Development Association (AMDETUR) annual convention in June. Themed "Resilience: Transforming Adversity Into Opportunity," the two-day event was held in Mexico City.

Three Interval representatives played active roles. Marcos Agostini, senior vice president of resort sales and business development for Latin America, and Juan Pablo Gomez, director of resort sales and service for Western Mexico, moderated conference sessions. And Ximena Villegas, director of resort sales and service for Eastern Mexico, served as the emcee of the conference.



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Contact your Interval resort sales and service representative for special Interval-affiliate pricing.



By Kathy Hernandez



Is Cuba Ready for Timesharing?

Following the U.S. government's recent ease of travel restrictions and improved diplomatic relations with Cuba, more than 40 percent of all Americans are now interested in traveling there, according to a report from travel insurance provider, Allianz Global Assistance. Cuba is already one of the largest tourism destinations in the Caribbean and is second only to the Dominican Republic in visitor arrivals. According to the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association, Cuba's hotel room total is approximately 62,000, with another 15,000 planned for construction in the next two years.

New access to the "forbidden fruit" is attracting lots of attention. Many tourists want to see Cuba before mass development changes the Cuban character that has been protected for so long. And there are those who want to be among the first to visit Cuba, with bragging rights that compel other travelers to want to go there, too.

But is Cuba ready for timesharing, let alone a surge in tourism from the U.S.? According to many with a finger on the pulse of activity in the Caribbean region, there may be a ways to go.

Deals in the Making

Hotels, airlines, and cruise ship companies in the U.S. are already planning to be a part of a future business boom for U.S. travelers in Cuba. "Some U.S. hotel companies have started working out arrangements in principle with Cuba in the past several months," says Vanessa Ledesma-Berrios, chief operating officer for the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association.

In March 2016, the U.S. government approved an application from Marriott International to pursue joint-venture business deals in Cuba. The company immediately began discussing opportunities with potential partners there.

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide also inked three hotel management deals in Cuba in March of this year, making it the first U.S. hospitality company to enter the country's market in almost 60 years. This summer, the Four Points by Sheraton, formerly the Hotel Quinta Avenida, opened in Havana. By the end of 2016, the Hotel Inglaterra in Havana will join Starwood's Luxury Collection, and Hotel Santa Isabel is set to follow.

Several airlines are planning for round-trip flights from U.S. cities to Cuban destinations before the end of 2016. In fact, JetBlue Flight 387, originating from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, touched down in Santa Clara, Cuba, on August 31 — the first U.S.-based scheduled commercial flight to Cuba in more than 50 years. The Department of Transportation has approved flights to Havana from 10 U.S. cities for eight airlines: Alaska Airlines, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Frontier Airlines, JetBlue, Southwest Airlines, Spirit Airlines, and United Airlines. Earlier in the summer, the DOT approved flights to nine Cuban cities other than Havana for American Airlines, Frontier Airlines, JetBlue, Silver Airways, Southwest Airlines, and Sun Country Airlines.

Exploding Demand, Lack of Infrastructure

A survey by Allianz Global Assistance, conducted during President Obama's historic visit to Cuba this past spring, found that after the easing

of travel restrictions, 42 percent of those surveyed would like to travel to the country. About 7 percent said they would be very likely to plan a trip to Cuba, while 22 percent were somewhat likely to do so.

Of the adventurous ones likely to visit Cuba, only 4 percent plan on doing so in 2016, while 10 percent will do so in 2017, and the remainder don't know when.

While Americans determine their likeliness to travel to Cuba in the future, according to permitted categories of travel, they will also make decisions based on changes in travel infrastructure in the country that still need to happen. This includes key areas such as: being able to use a credit card there, having access to Wi-Fi and the internet, the presence of modern medical facilities, staying in hotels with modern and up-to-date amenities and services, and traveling via U.S. airline flights and cruise vessels.



Don't Forget There's Still an Embargo

Along with general concerns and a lack of infrastructure, it's important not to lose sight of the fact that the Cuba embargo has not yet been lifted, according to Tomas Acevedo, Esq., director of state government affairs and legislative counsel for the American Resort Development Association (ARDA). "Travel to Cuba for general tourism is still not permitted for U.S. citizens," he says. "It's only allowed if it falls within [the] 12 categories identified in the Cuban Assets Control Regulations enforced by the Office of Foreign

Assets Control (OFAC)." (See sidebar on following page.)

The only change, he notes, is that a specific license is not required as long as the reason for travel falls within one of the 12 categories of travel. Previously, travel for any of these reasons required a specific license to be granted by the OFAC.

What Does This Mean for Timesharing?

Because no timeshare legislation exists now in Cuba, timeshare opportunities on the island are not immediate, and a lot needs to happen first between the U.S. and Cuban governments in order to create an environment for business to thrive, says Acevedo.

"A U.S.-type timeshare product would be hard to conceive in Cuba at this time. It certainly wouldn't be a deeded product in Cuba because all land belongs to the government," he explains. "Any timeshare law [would likely only] allow a right-to-use product, which has worked well for Mexico and the Dominican Republic. They are the two most successful timeshare markets in the region."

Changes in regulation are certainly critical for the establishment of timesharing in Cuba, observes Marcos Agostini, Interval International's senior vice president of resort sales and service for Latin America. "Because the U.S. consumers are the number-one buyers of timesharing, regulations that recognize some form of the right-to-use model would be helpful and wouldn't interfere with Cuban real estate laws."

In terms of purpose-built new product in Cuba, Acevedo says the most likely scenario could result from an integration of existing sites into a multisite offering.

When Will the Timing for Timeshare Be Right?

First and foremost, the travel restrictions from the U.S. to Cuba have to be lifted or further eased in order for timesharing to take root. And along with that are several other challenges that need to be overcome. For Ledesma-Berrios, that means solving issues with financial transactions and insurance matters. “Much legal work still needs to be done,” she adds. “We are quite a while away yet.”

Both Ledesma-Berrios and Acevedo agree that Cuba is not prepared yet for the onslaught of tourism that further easing of travel restrictions will bring. They see Cuba as needing to build an infrastructure — not just in communications, but also in transportation and lodging capacity — while easing its own business and legal restrictions.

“It’s hard to say exactly when timesharing could start to have a presence in Cuba,” says Acevedo. “We are talking a few years, realistically.” He points to this year, being an election year in the U.S., influencing the rate at which further developments happen. Whatever the outcome, he observes, “The door on Cuba has been opened and I don’t think it can be closed.” []

Kathy Hernandez is president of Orlando, Florida-based KHA PR, a public relations and marketing communications firm. She has more than 30 years of experience in the tourism and timeshare industries.

TRAVEL FROM THE U.S. TO CUBA

The Cuban Assets Control Regulations currently restricts travel from the U.S. to Cuba, except under certain circumstances. These include:

1. Family visits
2. Official business of the U.S. government, foreign governments, and certain intergovernmental organizations
3. Journalistic activities
4. Professional research and professional meetings
5. Educational activities
6. Religious activities
7. Public performances, clinics, workshops, athletic and other competitions, and exhibitions
8. Support for the Cuban people
9. Humanitarian projects
10. Activities of private foundations or research or educational institutes
11. Exportation, importation, or transmission of information or information materials
12. Certain export transactions may be considered for authorization under existing regulations and guidelines



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By Judy Kenninger



Open Arms

Welcoming Travelers With Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990 to ensure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. If you live in the U.S. and have a disability, or a family member or friend with a disability, the ADA has had a profound effect on your life. From access to restaurants and public restrooms to easy entry into historic sites and tourist attractions, people with conditions that affect their mobility or restrict other faculties can participate in more activities, find more jobs, and travel more easily.

Qualitative research reveals that travelers with disabilities prefer apartment-type accommodations over hotels, making them a natural fit for timeshare resorts. If they can drive there, even better.

More than a quarter-century later, most U.S.-based timeshare resorts have added accessibility features to units, along with pool lifts and other accommodations. But could they be getting a better return from their investments? “In the past two years, more than 26 million adults with disabilities took over 73 million trips,” says Eric Lipp, executive director of the Open Doors Organization, which sponsored a study of the market by Mandala Research LLC in 2015. “They spend US\$17.3 billion annually on just their own travel. Since these individuals typically travel with other adults, the economic impact is actually double, or US\$34.6 billion.”

Lipp also says that his organization’s qualitative research reveals that travelers with disabilities prefer apartment-type accommodations over hotels, making them a natural fit for timeshare resorts. If they can drive there, even better. “It’s easier when they can pack everything in the car and go,” he says.

Making Progress

In addition to accommodating rental guests and new buyers who have disabilities, timeshare resorts also must heed the needs of long-time owners who develop mobility issues as they age. “Disabilities become more frequent with adults over 50, but after age 65, adults are more likely to have a disability than not,” Lipp says. According to the American Resort Development Association International Foundation’s (AIF) most recent owner study, conducted in 2014, the median age of timeshare owners is 51.

At Marriott Vacations Worldwide Corporation, staff training includes information on accommodating guests with all types of physical restrictions. “We have even added training on identifying and assisting individuals with memory challenges,” says Ed Kinney, global vice president. “There are differing degrees of disabilities, so we ask what type of assistance is needed.”

During the reservation process, if a member asks for an accessible unit, the agent will inquire to find out which features are required. “We also have a record that would show if they have requested ADA units in the past, so if that’s the case, the agent will ask if they need one again,” Kinney says. “Sometimes they won’t have that family member or friend traveling with them again.”

According to Lori Card-King, vice president of quality assurance at Interval International, almost all timeshare resorts now offer ADA-compliant accommodations. However, Interval recommends that resorts not deposit ADA units so that they are only used for travelers with a need. This way, these units will be available if Interval calls with an exchange request from a member with a disability. “When a member requests an ADA unit, our vacation assistance department then contacts the resort to ensure that the member is booked into an available unit that meets their needs,” she says. “Once that’s done, we can confirm the exchange.”

Daniel Loera, general manager of Desert Breezes Resort Timeshare in Palm Desert, California, says his resort calls owners and exchange guests about 30 days before their stay to confirm details. “This is a good way to determine what we can do to make a guest’s stay better,” he says. “We can put groceries in their unit or even leave items on the counter instead of in an upper cabinet. It’s better for everyone because we can plan ahead.”

Making it easy for owners with disabilities to keep coming back definitely helps with owner retention. But to attract new customers, developers could perhaps learn from the cruise industry.

Cruising to Profits

Cruise travel has become the most popular international vacation among Americans with disabilities. According to Open Doors, 15 percent of travelers with disabilities have taken a cruise. “They find it easy, affordable, and accessible,” Lipp says. “With more ports in the United States, it’s easier for them to just drive to the ship.” Wheelchairs, scooters, medical oxygen, and other equipment can be delivered right to the stateroom, and medical facilities and personnel are available onboard.

Fine-Tuning: ADA Education and Reform Act

Although the timeshare industry strives to improve access for everyone, the American Resort Development Association (ARDA) has taken a stand against the practice of “drive-by” lawsuits. According to the group’s statement, unscrupulous attorneys file lawsuits against properties, businesses, and other public accommodations for minor and easily correctable (or oftentimes fraudulent) ADA violations. More often than not, these drive-by lawsuits do very little to improve access for those with disabilities.

To combat this practice, ARDA is backing the ADA Education and Reform Act, which:

- Allows property owners to receive notice of an alleged violation and a period of 60 days to give notice of intent to fix any problem. Further, it allows 120 days to complete work before facing a lawsuit.
- Would permit future legal action if there was failure by the property owner to address violations after notifications of a problem.
- Requires demand letters to provide specific information detailing circumstances of denial of access.
- Creates a mediation program to help parties resolve claims of barriers to access without costly litigation.

According to a 2013 article in the industry publication *Cruising*, from 2005 to 2007, the number of guests with disabilities jumped from 21,861 to 35,033 worldwide — a 60-percent rise. In the Caribbean during the same time period, the increase was from 7,870 to 12,612 — also a 60-percent increase.

What accounted for the growth? Cathy Vazquez, support services manager for Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL), says the first step was letting this market know they could accommodate their needs.

“We added an area on our website dedicated to accessible cruising that explains exactly what we do provide in accommodations,” she says. NCL has also partnered with groups including Special Needs at Sea and Open Doors. “It’s just letting the community know what’s available.”

NCL’s partnership with Open Doors included the production of a customer service video that features cruise travelers with hearing loss, vision loss, and reduced mobility explaining the dos and don’ts of disability etiquette and language.

“It explains to frontline staff how to provide service that’s respectful and appropriate,” Vazquez says. “One main tip is to ask

“One main tip is to ask first before attempting to help, and then listen to the guest’s instructions. Another is to use people-first language, which acknowledges the individual before their disability. We would say a woman who is blind rather than referring to her as a blind woman.”

— Cathy Vazquez, support services manager, Norwegian Cruise Line



first before attempting to help, and then listen to the guest’s instructions. Another is to use people-first language, which acknowledges the individual before their disability. We would say a woman who is blind rather than referring to her as a blind woman.”

Onboard ships, NCL has access officers who serve as points of contact for travelers with disabilities. “They’ll leave a letter in the cruiser’s cabin or knock on the door and introduce themselves,” Vazquez says. “It lets guests know they can come to them for help at any time.”

When guests leave the ship for shore excursions, NCL tries to make sure they don’t run into problems. “That’s a part of the conversation during our vetting process,” she says. “We ask, ‘Are there bus lifts?’ or ‘Do you have interpreters?’”

Increasing Outreach

Timeshare resorts could provide a similar service by visiting area restaurants and attractions to identify ones that are particularly suitable for guests with accessibility issues. Lipp advises resorts to add a page devoted to detailed information on the accommodations available and to train staff on how to identify and meet the needs of guests with disabilities. They can also take the next step and advertise in special-interest publications.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s most recent data, about 56.7 million people — one in five — has a disability, with more than half of them reporting the condition as severe. “If you’re already prepared to meet their needs, you might as well tell people,” Lipp says. “Fear can stop people from marketing to people with disabilities, but throw yourself into it. There’s nothing to be afraid of.” []

Judy Kenninger, RRP, heads Kenninger Communications and has been covering the shared ownership and vacation real estate industries for nearly two decades.

By Jacquelyn Kalis



Pillow Talk

Giving Thought to Where Your Guests Rest Their Head

Just as resorts have evolved far beyond simply being a place to stay the night, resort pillows have become much more than an afterthought. From lifespan to fill, down or synthetic — or even allowing guests to sample a variety of options — determining which pillows to furnish your resort’s units with can affect everything from customer satisfaction to the bottom line.

Take it from someone who’s in the business of knowing: Chris Rogers, vice president of Harbor Linen. An Interval Affiliate Advantages partner and a Bed Bath & Beyond company, Harbor Linen is a leading manufacturer and distributor of institutional linens, case goods, and apparel to the hospitality, health care, cruise line, and food service industries. “Pillows are one of the most important items you can buy for guest comfort,” says Rogers. “A bed

can be outfitted with five pillows for less than US\$50 and last you one to two years. A good night’s sleep can be ruined by a bad pillow.”

How Many Pillows? A Case for More

When aiming to maximize guest satisfaction when it comes to pillows, a one-size-fits-all approach or relying on personal preferences isn’t necessarily the way to go, Rogers advises.

“Whenever buying pillows, remember that your favorite pillow will not necessarily be your guests’ favorite pillow,” says Rogers. “The best solution is to put two styles of pillows on the bed, such as a medium and firm. This will better assure you of better guest satisfaction.”

This same approach can be taken when selecting between down pillows, which are often equated with luxury, and the generally more affordable (and less likely to aggravate allergies) synthetic-fill varieties. At Vistana Signature Experiences’ largest property, the Sheraton Vistana Resort in Orlando, Florida, each bed is made with a combination of down



and down-alternative pillows, according to Frank Tanksley, area director of purchasing.

Each bed is outfitted with two to four queen- or king-sized pillows: Twin beds have one queen feather pillow and one queen down-alternative, queen and full beds have two queen feather pillows and two queen down-alternatives, and king beds have two king feather pillows and two king down-alternatives.

The specific types of pillows used are in keeping with Sheraton brand standards, which encompass everything from the type of down-alternative fill (Enviroloft) and thread count for the pillow's basic covering (230 for down-alternative pillows) to the breakdown of materials in each feather pillow (a 50/50 combination of grey feathers and grey down).

Accent on Style

Beyond offering comfort, pillows can also provide an additional decor element in guest rooms, where the bed is often the first thing guests lay

eyes on. The signature Westin Heavenly Bed, for example, sets a calm tone with all-white bedding. Each includes a row of two down pillows, followed by two down-alternative pillows, and a smaller rectangular boudoir pillow as an accent. Other properties, especially in Caribbean destinations, inject vibrant color via decorative throw pillows or a single long bolster. Or for a boutique-style appearance, sleeping pillows can be backed by larger square Euro shams.

Comments from owners and exchange guests can also be an important indicator for resorts to consider when restocking inventory or revamping rooms. "Guest feedback is the best judge of any pillow," says Rogers. "For us, it is getting calls from the guests wanting to buy our pillows."

At Palace Resorts, guest feedback is taken into account when restocking, says Lorena Zahoul, director of operations. Requests for therapeutic pillows and firmer pillows have increased, she says, prompting the developer to consider stocking additional inventory.

Proper Care

Regular maintenance and inspection are key to maximizing the lifespan of a resort's pillow inventory. Rogers suggests the following guidelines to keep cushions in top working order:

- Pillows should be fluffed weekly.
- On occasion, pillows should be fluffed and refreshed in a dryer.
- Regular washing may not be the best bet. "While all pillows are technically washable, the pillow rarely looks and feels the same after washing. Washing a pillow is also a very expensive and time-consuming process. It can often take up to four hours just to dry a pillow."
- Pillow protectors can be used beneath pillowcases to deter dust mites and soiling. "This prevents many of the stains that shorten the life, and it is very easy and inexpensive to wash the protector versus the pillow."
- Inspect pillows regularly for excessive flatness, staining, etc. "By doing this, you can cull out the older, broken-down pillows and make sure your guest is getting a good night's sleep."

At the Sheraton Vistana Resort, both regular replacements and inspections are in place to maintain the pillows in all units, says Tanksley. "All pillows are scheduled to be replaced every two years," he says, "however, pillows are inspected annually during maintenance weeks and replaced as needed."

Pillow Menus: One From Column A ...

For some resorts, offering just the basics won't pass muster, particularly at high-end, all-inclusive properties. To meet the needs of even the choosiest guests, some luxury resorts have implemented pillow menus stocked with a wide variety of different cushion options.

At Karisma Hotels & Resorts' Azul Beach, a Gourmet Inclusive Hotel in Mexico's Riviera Maya, the signature aromatherapy and pillow menu is a hallmark of its all-inclusive program. And at Barceló Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic, a pillow menu is among the upgraded amenities in its Club Premium program, along with private concierge service and access to specialty restaurants.

Palace Resorts has also embraced the pillow-menu trend, making the amenity available in all rooms at Le Blanc Spa Resort in Cancún, Mexico, and Moon Palace Jamaica Grande in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, as well as presidential suites, villas, governor suites, ambassador suites, and concierge-level units at other Palace Resorts properties.

In each of these units, a pillow menu is placed in the room prior to the guests' arrival, says Zahoul. Seven types of pillows are offered: orthopedic, lavender, mint-lavender, chamomile, goose feather, hypoallergenic, and water. The most popular selection is lavender, says Zahoul, followed by orthopedic, mint-lavender, water, and chamomile.

Since its introduction seven years ago, the pillow-menu amenity has been well-received, she adds: "The guests always have very good comments regarding this subject."

While guests certainly don't expect such a wide selection beyond the basics at every resort, adding some level of choice — be it a pillow menu or simply an alternate variety — can go a long way toward making guests feel special for a minimal upfront cost. As one guest at the Azul Beach described on TripAdvisor.com, perks such as pillow menus, chilled towels, and Champagne all contribute to that coveted feeling of being pampered — encouraging five-star reviews in return. []



HARBOR LINEN
A BED BATH & BEYOND COMPANY

Purchasing Made Easy With Harbor Linen

When looking to purchase new pillows — as well as other bedding, towels, window treatments, amenity products, and more — Interval's developer partners enjoy access to preferential prices through Harbor Linen.

As for pillow purchasing, Harbor Linen carries a selection of five pillow styles, along with optional pillow protectors:

- Glamour Pillows feature patented curved corners that push fill to the center, maximizing loft (or thickness) and support. The rounded design also enables quick cover changes and allows the pillow to stand up for "an inviting presentation." Hospitality clients can choose from soft, medium, firm, and extra-firm varieties.
- New Generation Pillows boast a nonallergenic microfiber fill with a down-like feel and stain-resistant, high-thread-count ticking for a longer lifespan.
- New Generation "Zone" Pillows balance softness and support with small whole feathers surrounded by New Generation fiber in a 233-thread-count cotton cover, finished with a double-needle corded edge.
- Softique Pillows are marketed as the "softest down-like pillow available." Each 180-thread-count cotton cover is filled with 23 ounces (652 grams) of super slick cluster fibers.
- Soft & Downey Pillows offer "the comfort of down, at the price of feather." White duck down is encircled by white duck feathers in a 233-thread-count cotton cover.

Harbor's best-selling pillow is the microfiber-filled New Generation, Rogers says. The Glamour line is also popular. Rogers adds that Harbor Linen gets a significant number of calls from guests inquiring about these pillow types. Both varieties also offer a lifespan beyond the industry norm, he says. "The average poly-fill pillow will last about one year," he says. "Our [Harbor and Glamour] pillows ... will last one-and-a-half to two years if handled properly."

Sold in cases of 12, New Generation Pillows are available to Interval member resorts at prices ranging from US\$7.75 to US\$9.88 per unit. Interval-member pricing for the Glamour Pillows collection ranges from US\$6.49 to US\$14.43 per unit, depending on pillow size, case pack, and fill.

Harbor Linen is among the latest additions to the Interval Affiliate Advantages partners.

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By J.B. Bissell

Phuket:

Asia's Field of Dreams

Phuket's prime global position — right off Thailand's southwestern coast in the Andaman Sea, and just beyond the northern exit of the Malacca Strait — has made it a popular stopping-off point for travelers since the dawn of the Common Era. Of course, for the majority of those initial 2,000 years, most of the visitors were either colonists, pirates, or traders. But then, in 1967, when the Sarasin Bridge opened, the island was connected to the mainland for the first time, and Phuket's guest demographic changed forever.

It was a slow burn initially, with the stunning — and predominantly deserted — beaches attracting mostly backpackers and other easy-going wanderers who weren't necessarily on any sort of set schedule. By the mid-'70s, though, descriptions of talcum-soft sand and turquoise-colored water, not to mention friendly locals and a mesmerizing jungle interior, spread, and development was underway.

"Phuket has been a very popular tourist destination in this part of the world as long as I can remember, and I have been visiting for more than 45 years," says Joe Hickman, vice president and executive director of Asia/Pacific for Interval International. "It's really a quintessential island destination, with the beaches and clear water you'd expect, combined with delicious food, great nightlife, welcoming people, and affordability all contributing to the success of the island."

A Resilient Escape

As popular as it's been over the course of the last few decades, though, the overall scene hasn't always been as idyllic as the photos of Phang Nga Bay or the Big Buddha statue or the Phi Phi Islands make it seem. In 1986, protests against the opening of a tantalum production plant ended with a massive fire that caused substantial damage to one of the most popular hotels in Phuket Town. In December 2004, a tsunami flooded the island, tossing cars into buildings, destroying properties, and resulting in thousands of deaths.

As expected, visitor numbers dropped through 2005 — by almost half, in fact, based on the total number of global passenger arrivals at Phuket International Airport, according to the Airports of Thailand marketing team. The same report, though, shows that by 2007, at least for world travelers, things were back to normal, and Phuket's popularity regained its upward momentum.

Positive gains continued to be the trend through the first half of 2016, even after the political transition to a military-based government in 2014. As of press time, however, it remains to be seen whether the series of bombings that hit several tourist locations in Thailand, including Phuket, will affect travel to the area.



It's a testament to the location itself that past events haven't impaired its tourism trajectory. "While people are certainly wary any time this sort of news is reported, it has always had only a very short-term impact on tourism to Thailand," explains Hickman. "Be it political change or a tsunami, tourists return quickly after any event. For a multitude of reasons, people are very forgiving when things like that happen in Thailand."

Maybe it's the beaches. Prototypical strands can be found all around the island, with activities ranging from snorkeling to simple sun worshiping. There are family-friendly stretches and other sections where it's almost impossible to differentiate between the end of last night's party and the beginning of today's festivities.

Or perhaps it's something else. The natural scenery is the stuff of Hollywood legend, literally: Phang Nga Bay's can't-miss geologic highlight is known as "James Bond Island" because it was featured in *The Man With the Golden Gun*. It's an impressive sight, but the truth of the matter is that nearly all of the local limestone features — craggy cliff faces, rock bridges, and proud pinnacles shaped by eons of ocean sculpting — are remarkable.

There's scores of shopping, too, and restaurants, cultural experiences, eco adventures, Buddhist temples, and tours of all manner.

Most likely, though, the reason political demonstrations and natural disasters don't keep people away for long is because Phuket is such a wonderful and harmonious blend of all these attractions.

Indeed, as Hickman says, "Naturally, there is a laid-back beach scene all around, but there are high-end sections of the island as well, and more touristy sections where bars and late-night entertainment are the norm." There are multimillion-dollar vacation villas built all over the island, and yachts and luxury cruise ships in the harbor. And then there are plane-loads of backpackers who arrive daily. And they all seem to mix well together, according to Hickman.

"It helps that the island is big enough that, if you want, you can get away from all the typical stuff and go for a genuine local experience," he adds. "Plus — and this is incredibly important — the Thais are very welcoming and engage well with tourists."



Timeshare Tourism

They've engaged very well with vacation ownership, too. "General tourism is the bread and butter for Phuket," says Hickman. "It's among the top four tourist destinations in Thailand, along with Bangkok, Pattaya, and Chiang Mai, and probably ranks number three after Bangkok and Pattaya."

In terms of timeshare, though, Hickman says Phuket leads the list. For starters, there are simply more vacation ownership opportunities in Thailand than anywhere else in Southeast Asia. In 2015, C9 Hotelworks, a Phuket-based hospitality consultancy, identified 154 timeshare properties peppered throughout the region. Thirty-five percent of those, by far the largest concentration, were located in Thailand.

And most of those are in Phuket, Hickman says: "There are more resorts actively engaged in vacation ownership there than any other destination in Asia." The concept was introduced in Thailand nearly a quarter-century ago, and "much like Orlando, Phuket attracts visitors from around the world who typically stay for long holidays — one- to two-week minimums — so there are a lot of opportunities to speak to prospects," Hickman adds.

In addition, for the majority of those 25 years, prospects have been exposed to some of the foremost developers in the industry. "The largest and best purpose-built vacation ownership projects in Asia were first established in Phuket by the likes of Marriott, Laguna, and Anantara, thus timesharing gained momentum quicker here than places that only have small resorts with relatively few units," says Hickman.

Upward Mobility

And like Phuket tourism itself, the timesharing momentum seems poised to continue its upward trend. "The concept is relatively new to most Asians, but they are embracing it, so future prospects for the business are bright," Hickman says. In other words, there are countless consumers out there



waiting to learn about the joy of vacationing at a fully amenitized resort property.

The most promising piece of the current sales puzzle is that the majority of potential purchasers are now coming from new buyer markets. The Tourism Authority of Thailand has reported that, from January through April of 2016, 14.1 percent more people traveled to Thailand than during the same period in 2015. The largest collection of visitors — with an increase of more than 27 percent — hails from China.

This all makes sense to Hickman because of recent socio-economic improvements and the burgeoning middle class there, as well as in other nearby countries. "Timeshare is quickly gaining popularity, especially in China and India," he says. "India currently has more timeshare owners than most of the other Asian countries combined, so while not a completely new concept, the ability of the middle-class population to afford timeshare is very new."

Previously, developers in well-known resort areas such as Phuket and Bali only targeted Western prospects, says Hickman, "But, because of these emerging consumer populations, they now have salespeople who speak Mandarin, Bahasa Indonesia, and more, so they can sell to people they previously didn't market to because of language barriers."

Communication challenges or not, Interval International has been in operation in Thailand and throughout Asia for at least 25 years, and is affiliated with the region's major timeshare brands. "Anantara was our latest big affiliation in Phuket," Hickman says. "That group alone now has more than 7,000 members."

With new affiliations and a seemingly endless supply of new consumers flowing into Thailand from fresh markets, it shouldn't be a surprise that Hickman calls Phuket "undoubtedly the most important market for Interval in Asia at this time."

Indeed, the future of timeshare in Phuket appears very promising, so Hickman's final piece of advice is simply: "Build it and they will come." []



A Sampling of Interval International–Affiliated Phuket Resorts

Be sure to read the features on two other developers with properties in Phuket: Angsana Vacation Club, on page 28, and Club Unique, on page 30.

Marriott's Phuket Beach Club (1)

Thanks to well-kept gardens and tranquil ponds adorned with lilies, not to mention swimming pools facing the Andaman Sea, this resort property allows guests to truly feel at one with Phuket's natural beauty.

Marriott's Mai Khao Beach (2)

In addition to an assortment of comfort-enriching features — such as master suites with an oversized tub in the bathroom, individual outdoor seating, and more — this resort is situated less than 1,000 feet (305 meters) from Mai Khao beach.

Anantara Vacation Club Phuket Mai Khao (3)

This property is adjacent to Sirinath National Park, so while Phuket's longest beach, Mai Khao, is an easy walk away, the park's unique natural features — mangrove forests, sea caves, and peaceful atolls — also are easily accessible.

Absolute Twin Sands Beach Resort & Spa (4)

Couples and families all appreciate the Absolute Twin Sands Beach Resort & Spa. It's situated close to Patong, so shopping and nightlife are nearby, and the infinity pools and spa are popular with folks who simply want to recharge.

LHC Private Pool Villas (5)

LHC Private Pool Villas is one of the resorts that make up the entirety of the Laguna Phuket complex. There's an on-site golf course, but for many guests, the highlight of their stay is the availability of the 30 restaurants and bars.

LHC at Angsana Laguna Phuket

Located in the famed Laguna Phuket complex, the resort offers guests a variety of places to eat or get a drink. Optional on-site activities abound, too. Sailing, scuba diving, and waterskiing are very popular.



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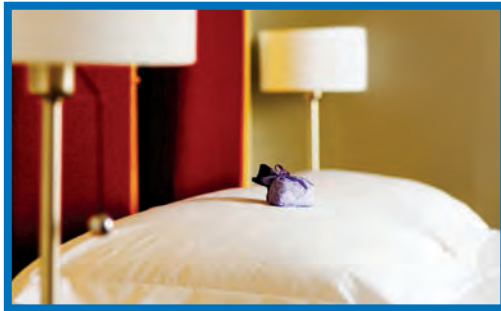
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By Joyce Hadley Copeland

Asian Experiences for **Asian Markets**



Thirty years ago, the founders of Laguna Resorts & Hotels snapped up a swath of coastal property in Phuket, Thailand, only to discover that its captivating cobalt-blue lagoons were the result of pollution from its former resident, a tin mine. Rather than abandon plans to develop a master-planned resort community, the founders dug in, restoring the acid-contaminated soil by planting more than 7,000 trees, and creating Laguna Phuket in 1987. The company opened its first Banyan Tree resort in 1994, and Banyan Tree became a Singapore public-listed company in 2006.

Today, the Laguna Phuket resort complex sprawls across 1,000 acres (405 hectares) of tropical parkland, and is home to several deluxe hotels, exclusive condominiums and villas, a shopping village, the acclaimed Banyan Tree Spa and Angsana Spa, and an award-winning 18-hole golf course — Laguna Golf Phuket. The latest chapter in this epic success story? The newly launched points-based vacation ownership offered through Angsana Vacation Club.

Unwrapping Asia

Leveraging Banyan Tree's family of lifestyle brands, Angsana Vacation Club is curating a bespoke portfolio of vacation experiences, each celebrating the cultural riches of Asia through its authentic sense of place.

The initial portfolio of Club Resorts includes Angsana- and Cassia-branded properties in Laguna Phuket, and another Angsana resort in the new Laguna Lang Co. development in central Vietnam, an hour from Da Nang. Members may also use their points to reserve stays at 10 Angsana and Banyan Tree properties in the Club Connections portfolio located in popular destinations, including China, Morocco, Maldives, and Seychelles.

"Our hotels are distinctively designed according to the destination," says Norbert Jeske, general manager of Angsana Vacation Club. "They come with all the amenities, but they are culturally blended with the authentic elements and artistic flavor of the country you're visiting. I think in today's day and age, that's probably more experiential and enticing."

Marketing Mix

Prospective club members may get their first introduction to vacation ownership during a stay at Laguna Phuket, where Angsana Vacation Club has two very different properties — Angsana Laguna Phuket and Cassia Phuket — and its only sales center. Angsana Vacation Club's third property is in Central Vietnam.

The club schedules three-night mini-vacations for residents of



Asian countries from its call center. On-site, Angsana Vacation Club ambassadors reach out to guests vacationing at a hotel within Laguna Phuket, offering a thank-you gift for attending a 90-minute presentation.

ANVC at Angsana Laguna Phuket has one- and two-bedroom lofts built over the sparkling lagoon. Spacious multistory suites have bedrooms on a different level above the living area and soaring double-height ceilings. Split-level, one-bedroom units have an outdoor tub, and two-bedroom units have a private rooftop patio. Playful artistic touches in the decor are true to the Angsana brand's emphasis on contemporary style, vibrant colors, and local culture.

Speaking to New Segments

While families are the main target market for Angsana Vacation Club, another Club Resort under the Cassia brand skews toward the younger end of the market, welcoming independent-minded couples, young families, and groups of friends.

ANVC at Cassia Phuket's one- and two-bedroom hotel residences have "super-chill" living spaces and fully stocked kitchens, free IPTV premium channels, and custom playlists. Complimentary continental breakfast is delivered in a signature tiffin box (commonly used to carry meals to school or work in Asia). While ANVC at Cassia Phuket vacationers might opt for beer pong over golf, or embark on a pub-crawl after a day at the beach, both Angsana Vacation Club resorts share access to Laguna Phuket's abundant amenities and activities.

Fresh Locations

The third Club Resort in Angsana Vacation Club's initial portfolio, Angsana Lang Co., sits on a beautiful white-sand beach within the master-planned resort community of

Laguna Lang Co. The resort's two-bedroom Sky View Villas have private pools, views of the East Sea from the sundeck and stylish glass-walled interior spaces, and easy access to a wide range of amenities and activities, including a beach club, water sports activity center, and a 984-foot (300 meters) serpentine swimming pool and spa. The resort's 18-hole Nick Faldo championship golf course ranks among the top 10 courses in Asia/Pacific, according to the 2015 Asian Golf Awards.

Situated on a spit of land with 6 miles (10 kilometers) of sandy beach on one side and a turquoise lagoon on the other, Angsana Lang Co. is also well-located for exploring some of Vietnam's UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The resort offers complimentary shuttles to the historic trading port of Hoi An and Hue, the country's imperial capital under the Nguyen dynasty.

Angsana Vacation Club members who purchase one of three tiered-membership points packages are also eligible for the club's Bonus Break last-minute deals at any of the three resorts. They can also use their points to travel farther afield to stay at hotels in the Club Connections resort portfolio.

Making Connections

Each property in Angsana Vacation Club's growing Club Connections portfolio is hand-picked for the distinctive, culturally authentic experience it offers. While some hotel chains pride themselves on a generic standard of luxury that is the same anywhere in the world, Jeske notes that Angsana believes in the magic of discovering a new culture in diverse destinations including China, Laos, Maldives, Morocco, Seychelles, and Thailand.

"All Banyan Tree-branded properties in the Club Connections portfolio range from villas with private pools and magnificent ocean views in Seychelles to Tibetan-style farmhouses with handcrafted wooden hot tubs in China," says Jeske. A renowned international brand throughout Asia, Banyan Tree conveys instant credibility on Angsana Vacation Club, Jeske says.

Angsana-branded properties in the Club Connections portfolio include circular, thatched-roof villas in Maldives and classic Moroccan riads in Marrakech.

"We are always exploring new locations," Jeske says. "When we started the club, we didn't have Seychelles in our portfolio, and three months down the road, we have added it. As the Banyan Tree and Angsana portfolios grow, we will be adding more locations on our map."

Interval extends the Angsana Vacation Club portfolio by giving members the opportunity to exchange to similar quality resorts throughout the rest of the world. "I think what made Interval stand out is the depth and quality in terms of exchange resorts," Jeske says.

Steady Growth

With the ability to leverage growth by adding properties under Banyan Tree's umbrella and from trusted brands it partners with, Angsana Vacation Club is already anticipating adding new sales centers. "After Phuket has gotten some traction, we might be looking at other sales offices in Vietnam, where we have inventory," Jeske says. Beyond that, he sees China as a good option for engaging the club's Asian market.

The clear message to the discerning Angsana Vacation Club members: Asia/Pacific is your oyster. []

fastfacts

Angsana Vacation Club

Developer: Angsana Vacation Club Limited

Headquarters: Phuket, Thailand

Product: Points-based vacation ownership

Units: One and two-bedroom lofts, suites, and pool villas

Resorts: ANVC at Angsana Laguna Phuket and ANVC at Cassia Phuket, Thailand; Angsana Lang Co., Vietnam

Price: From US\$12,000

Website: angsanavacationclub.com

Social Media: Facebook, Twitter

By Jeff Zbar

A New Industry Entrant in **Phuket**



Club Unique finds itself in an enviable position. On Thailand’s popular provincial island of Phuket are the beaches, nightlife, and cultural hotspots that draw upward of 5 million vacationers each year. But most importantly, the club offers unique access to the famed Patong Bay beaches with a handful of high-caliber resorts. And as Club Unique makes its first foray into Asia’s timeshare market, the company — which recently affiliated its Patong Bay Hill Resort with Interval International — is well-poised to serve up some appealing new options in the vibrant Phuket timeshare community.

The developer has been selling units at Patong Bay Hill Resort on a whole-ownership basis. However, the success of other shared ownership clubs in Phuket encouraged them to start sales of shared ownership as well, says Kit Whalley, Interval International director of business development for Asia/Pacific.

A Peaceful Enclave

Patong Bay Hill Resort, designed to deliver a luxurious Thai vacation experience, is scheduled for completion in December 2016, when 366 studio and one-bedroom units should be finished. The total number of units may increase, says Jimmy P. Semaan, managing director of Club Unique. “We have an adjacent piece of land that we might develop into more units in the near future.”

Club Unique is starting off with a few of the resort’s units dedicated to vacation ownership, but there is potential to use more units in the future, as sales justify it, Semaan adds.

Each unit, up to 646 square feet (60 square meters) in size, has a small kitchenette, and 183 of the units offer direct patio access to a swimming pool.

With easy access to nearby restaurants, shops, and nightlife centered around the famous *Soi Bangla* (Bangla Road), the resort will also provide regular shuttle bus service to Patong Beach.

Over the past few years, the Thai government, through a highly successful tourist campaign, has restored the beaches to the state they were in before the 2004 tsunami. And Club Unique is ideally positioned to benefit from the new mandates that prevent construction directly on the beaches. Given the proximity to the shore, the developer has

built an adjoining private beach area, making the property one of the most prized in the area.

Year-Round Sales Flow

The location is anticipated to be a bonus to an already attractive floating right-to-use ownership. Club Unique’s marketing strategy will target vacationers from Thailand’s traditional international feeder markets, including Australia, New Zealand, Europe, the U.S., and Canada.

Low season, from May through October, lures Australians, New Zealanders, and others from the Southern Hemisphere seeking to escape their winter weather. During high season, from November through April, sales efforts will expand to include Europeans, especially from France, Germany, Sweden, Norway, and Finland.

China, little more than three hours away by plane, could present the greatest future opportunities. “We see that as being the key market for the next three to five years,” says Philip Frank Mason, director of operations for Club Unique.

At its sales office at Patong Bay Hill Resort, programs include conventional OPC, as well as telemarketing outreach and cold-line efforts. The company is also developing a fly-buy program, expanding beyond Australia to the European and, specifically, Scandinavian markets.

One-of-a-Kind

Most compelling to the beach-loving guests of Club Unique’s Patong Bay Hill Resort, however, is the VIP access to the amenities of the upcoming Bay and Beach Club, including several bars, a swimming pool, locker rooms and showers, a DJ booth, and a restaurant. “This will be the jewel in the crown,” Mason says. “There is no other beach club here. That will set it apart from everything else.”

Joe Hickman, Interval’s vice president and executive director of Asia/Pacific, agrees and sees the relationship between Club Unique and Interval as mutually beneficial. “Club Unique’s affiliation with Interval International will create an exciting addition to our global portfolio of properties. We are pleased to welcome Patong Bay Hill Resort.” []

Jeff Zbar is a South Florida-based business and travel journalist and corporate copywriter.

fastfacts

Club Unique

Headquarters: Phuket, Thailand

Product: Floating, right-to-use vacation ownership

Website: club-unique.com

Social Media: Facebook

GIVE THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT.

Choice is king. Options are no longer an option — they're a must. Club Interval Gold® delivers. It's the best of traditional timeshare combined with the flexibility of points-based programs. Owners can trade up, trade down, and take long weekends all around.

And it gets *you* to the point — fast. No significant operational changes. Very little incremental expense incurred. Plug in and sell. Existing owners, new purchasers, all of the above — it's your call.



BRING MORE TO THE TABLE:

Club Interval Gold helps close sales and keeps members engaged year-round.

AND WHEN NEW OWNERS BECOME ENGAGED MEMBERS, WE ALL SUCCEED.

By Judy Kenninger



From Good to Great in Williamsburg, Virginia

With its location near some of the nation's premier tourist attractions, including Colonial Williamsburg, Busch Gardens Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Yorktown, **Holiday Inn Club Vacations® Williamsburg Resort** has a lot going for it. But when Orange Lake Resorts, home to Holiday Inn Club Vacations®, purchased the property known as Colonial Crossings in 2013, the resort was struggling. Competition for prospects was fierce, with six other timeshare resorts within 15 miles; sales had been discontinued.

“There were other companies that looked at it and shied away because of the property’s condition,” recalls Patrick Connolly, senior vice president and chief customer officer for Orange Lake Resorts. “But we loved the location and believed we had the people and the resources to go in and fix that situation.”

Now an Interval International Premier Resort®, the Williamsburg property has indeed been “fixed.” As Connolly explains, the developer took a multipronged approach that succeeded where others had failed. Key ingredients included the power of the Holiday Inn Club Vacations brand, Orange Lake Resorts’ management expertise, and a substantial investment in the resort’s units and amenities. Adding a huge scoop of flexibility completed the formula.

Preservation Plan

For Holiday Inn Club Vacations, the resort had several features that made it attractive. “It’s a great location for our owners, near Washington, D.C., and all the history,” Connolly says. “From a sales and marketing standpoint, it was also very attractive because there is such a large drive-to market all along the East Coast. Once the acquisition was final in 2013, the plan was to open the property under the HICV flag in 2014.”

Yet when the company took ownership, Holiday Inn Club Vacations found that the existing owners weren’t greeting them with open arms. “They had a lot of trepidation about timeshare developers because of their past experiences,” says Connolly, so the company ensured that all plans were solid before sharing them with the owners.

Holiday Inn Club Vacations quickly delivered on its promises. Room and resort renovations amounted to more than US\$12 million; a previously unused building was turned into units, its top two floors featuring upscale Signature Collection villas. This top-of-the-line product tier features granite countertops, deluxe kitchen appliances, and luxurious interior decor, along with other extras such as premium bath amenities, plush bathrobes, and VIP member check-in.

The 120 one-, two-, and three-bedroom villas range from 682 to 1,884 square feet (63 to 175 square meters), and the three-bedroom villas have a lock-off option.

A new Town Center, completed in 2015, includes an arcade, a four-lane bowling alley, an 18-hole minigolf course, a sports court, a playground, a fitness center, an indoor pool, and a snack bar and marketplace. Along with the facilities improvements came a daily activities program for families.

Just as important as physical enhancements were upgrades to resort service. “We also brought in our brand standards as far as how we take care of our guests and the rooms,” Connolly says. “We let existing owners see the way that we take care of them as owners, and provide due diligence with their maintenance fees to show we are great stewards of their resort.”

That didn’t mean completely replacing the existing staff, however. “We did bring in some of our own staff who had grown up in the Holiday Inn Club Vacations way to help the resort implement our standards,” he says. “We helped them grow the existing people who were there, offered them new opportunities, and got them excited about being part of a group that was going to do what they said — and do things professionally. That really motivated the existing staff.”

Sales Success

With the resort’s service and facilities up to brand standards, Holiday Inn Club Vacations could also unleash its marketing and sales machine to bring

in new guests and owners. Key to that effort has been the developer Orange Lake Resorts' alliance with the InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), the world's largest hotel company. The brand's flagship property in Orlando, Florida, located next to the Walt Disney World Resort, was established in 1982 by Holiday Inn founder Kemmons Wilson. Other resort locations include Lake Geneva, Wisconsin; Panama City Beach and Marco Island, Florida; and Las Vegas, Nevada, among eight additional Holiday Inn Club Vacations resorts, with 13 more resorts expected to join the Holiday Inn Club soon.

Instead of relying on expensive off-premises contact programs to generate sales, Holiday Inn Club Vacations relies mainly on guests staying at nearby Holiday Inn properties or booking into the resort using their IHG Rewards Club points. Connolly says, "All our leads are relationship leads from IHG, existing owners, or traditional timeshare exchange guests. This allows us to look at locations and know we can get the leads required to have a successful sales operation."

Even better, when given a tour, IHG Rewards Club members are some of the best prospects for timeshare sales. "They love Holiday Inn; they love the history of the brand," Connolly says. "The fact that we can connect the founder of our company, Orange Lake Resorts, with Holiday Inn completes the story for them."

Focus on Flexibility

Because Holiday Inn Club Vacations Williamsburg Resort is a drive-to resort, guests often prefer stays of less than seven nights; the average stay is 4.4 nights. Holiday Inn Club Vacations' timeshare product, which combines the security of deeded ownership with the flexibility of a points overlay, is a natural fit. That's true for guests and exchange guests, but it's also true for the existing owners at the resort.

"About 40 percent of sales are to existing owners," Connolly says. "Many of them thought that their options were limited. Now, they have a whole new world of resorts with options for shorter stays. They can also take those points and use them in the hotel world in addition to Interval's exchange

options. They see it as a great add-on, but we are careful to let them know that what they have is also great and if they want to keep it, we'll honor that and they'll continue to have great vacations."

For clients interested in different types of vacation experiences, such as urban hotels, the IHG relationship comes with a myriad of options. "Since we are with the majority of the IHG brands, we can talk to them about InterContinental, about Crowne Plaza and Indigo; it really expands their opportunity," Connolly says. "They can stay at InterContinental properties all around the world."

Still, the message at the sales table is that timeshare vacations are best. "With Interval's network of resorts, we're able to talk to them about our resorts and Interval resorts," he says. "We make the distinction between timeshare stays and hotel stays. Timeshare stays are always the preferred experience as a home away from home, and the most affordable, efficient use of their points. Interval has made it very easy for Holiday Inn Club Vacations points to translate into the Interval world, so they can get the vacation they want."

The company's expectations for its Williamsburg Resort project have come to fruition; the resort doubled its projected volume for 2014, and more than doubled 2014 sales again in 2015, while reducing rescissions. The project team has been so successful, in fact, that it took home an ARDY award in the sales and marketing division at the 2016 ARDA World Convention. []

fastfacts

Holiday Inn Club Vacations Williamsburg Resort

Developer: Orange Lake Resorts

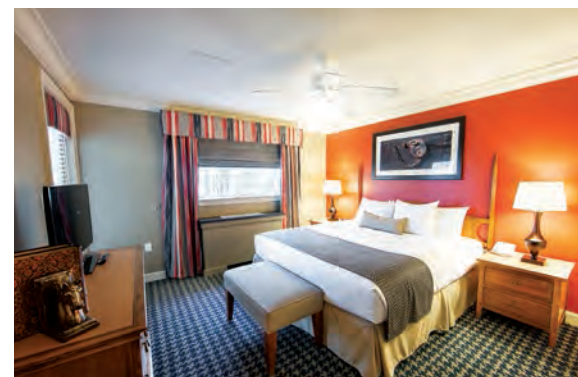
Location: Williamsburg, Virginia

Product: Deeded product with a points overlay component

Units: 120 villas including the Signature Collection, an exclusive luxury-tier product

Website: ihg.com/holidayinnclubvacations

Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram



By Joyce Hadley Copeland

Turning Vacation Owners Into

Urban Insiders

Just beyond the rush and whirl of a day-trip to a metropolitan mecca such as Manhattan or Boston, lies an invitation to wander, where ducking into neighborhood shops, sampling street food, and catching a play all become part of the experience.

MARRIOTT VACATION CLUB PULSESM AT CUSTOM HOUSE, BOSTON



MARRIOTT VACATION CLUB PULSESM AT THE MAYFLOW, WASHINGTON, D.C.



MARRIOTT VACATION CLUB PULSESM, SOUTH BEACH



MARRIOTT VACATION CLUB PULSESM, NEW YORK CITY



As more vacation owners trade the reliable thump of the surf for the flash of neon and the electric pulse of a living, breathing city, Marriott Vacation Club is among a cadre of timeshare companies welcoming them into the heart of the action. Front and center in five U.S. cities — Boston, Miami, New York City, San Diego, and Washington, D.C. — Marriott Vacation Club PulseSM properties add a fresh dimension to the timeshare experience, inviting vacationers to discover a city's secrets and feel like an insider rather than a tourist.

The Pulse Plus

"When people come to one of these properties, they're getting the insider, part-of-the-community look at where to go and what to do and where to dine," says Ed Kinney, global vice president of corporate affairs and communications for Marriott Vacations Worldwide. "We're going to know the cool little places that aren't on their radar."

Marriott Vacation Club members have been using their points to stay at Marriott International's urban hotels for years, but within the timeshare component, the city-centric experiences that members were asking for were scarce. "People's travel tendencies have shifted," Kinney says. "They like the shorter stays. They like urban environments. It's a great opportunity for us to expand our portfolio and have things that are more relevant to a wider audience of people."

Kinney says urban vacations appeal to Marriott Vacation Club members across the board. People living on the East Coast love being able to take their kids to see the sights in D.C. and Boston. Empty nesters book off-peak explorations, and younger couples like short stays. "Suffice to say that if you take a cross-section of our owners, the predominant number are going to want to have an urban experience at some point or another," he says.

Location, Location, Location

Given that, location is key, Kinney says. All Pulse properties are within walking distance of shops, restaurants, museums, and nightlife. In some cases, they are city landmarks themselves.

Marriott Vacation Club PulseSM at Custom House, Boston, is housed in the historic Custom House and Clock Tower, part of the city's skyline since 1847. It towers above the Boston Harbor, close to the city's many historic and cultural sites.

At Marriott Vacation Club PulseSM at The Mayflower, Washington, D.C., guests are invited into the chandelier-lined hallways on the seventh floor of The Mayflower Hotel, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The property offers easy access to the White House, Lincoln Memorial, and Smithsonian museums.

The chic Strand Hotel, in the midst of New York City's Fashion District, is home to the Marriott Vacation Club PulseSM, New York City. It is an easy walk to Times Square and the Theater District.

In Miami Beach, Florida, Marriott Vacation Club PulseSM, South Beach, is across the street from the beach and close to the boutiques and nightclubs of Collins and Washington avenues, and the restaurants, shops, and cafes along Lincoln Road.

The newest Pulse property, Marriott Vacation Club PulseSM, San Diego, is an easy stroll to restaurants, rooftop bars, live theater, and shops in the historic Gaslamp Quarter.

Personality Pulse

But location is only part of the Pulse panache.

Each property is one-of-a-kind, handpicked for its architectural style and designed to capture the unique character and soul of its home city.

Being in the center of the action means that Pulse units can be smaller than the usual two-bedroom villa, for example, and range from hotel rooms to one-bedroom suites with kitchenettes and foldout sofa beds. With so many attractions nearby, fewer on-site amenities are necessary. Marriott Vacation Club PulseSM, San Diego, which opened in July 2016, is the only one with an indoor pool, whirlpool, and children's activity center.

"Obviously, you're not going to have traditional amenities like pool features, tennis courts, or some of the other things that are mainstays with the resort environment," says Kinney.

The Prototype for Pulse

Marriott Vacation Club PulseSM at Custom House, Boston, provided a prototype for the Pulse personality, Kinney says. "It fit the formula of what we regard as a Pulse property: close to everything, surrounded by a lot of different points of interest. So we pulled it into the Pulse system."

From there, Marriott Vacation Club PulseSM built its signature portfolio one property at a time as the right opportunities arose. The Mayflower Hotel was part of Marriott International's Autograph Collection. And in New York City, "We had always looked at having something there and could never quite find the right opportunity, until we found The Strand."

Miami presented a very different opportunity. The 1936 Mediterranean Revival structure that is home to the Marriott Vacation Club PulseSM, South Beach, is an architectural gem in the Art Deco district. Still, at 49 units, Kinney admits the South Beach Pulse property would have been too small to fit the Marriott International formula.

"As a business, we probably could not have done it if we were still under the halo of Marriott International," Kinney admits. "When we spun off nearly five years ago, it gave us a lot of independence and latitude to look at things from a different perspective." Quality standards and operational issues are still top of mind when evaluating prospective properties, especially those needing to be refurbished. But the sum total — character, architecture, and location — has to be exactly right for its market. In South Beach, "We knew it would be a cool new element to what the Pulse properties should be and we could figure it out," Kinney says.

Options and Flexibility Rule

Marriott Vacation Club's urban brand extension has been a great addition to the many flexible options more than 400,000 members already enjoy using their points, Kinney says.

"When you own with Marriott Vacation Club, there are so many different options for how you can use your timeshare ownership, whether you stay at your home resort, exchange within our other properties, or through the Interval International collection, cruises, and more. All these choices really will cater to almost every type of leisure travel that we could imagine somebody wanting to do. It's just widening the portfolio to make it more attractive for the folks who are looking for vacation ownership."

Marriott Vacation Club PulseSM also has its own website with a cosmopolitan feel fitting its persona.

Kinney expects that Marriott Vacation Club PulseSM will continue to look at adding other properties in more cities. "We are going to continue to evolve this brand extension as we get more feedback from the customers experiencing it." []

Joyce Hadley Copeland, based in Tucson, Arizona, contributes regularly to travel and hospitality publications and websites.

fastfacts

Marriott Vacation Club Pulse

Developer: Marriott Vacations Worldwide Corporation

Location: Orlando, Florida

Product: Points-based vacation ownership and deeded points-based fractional ownership

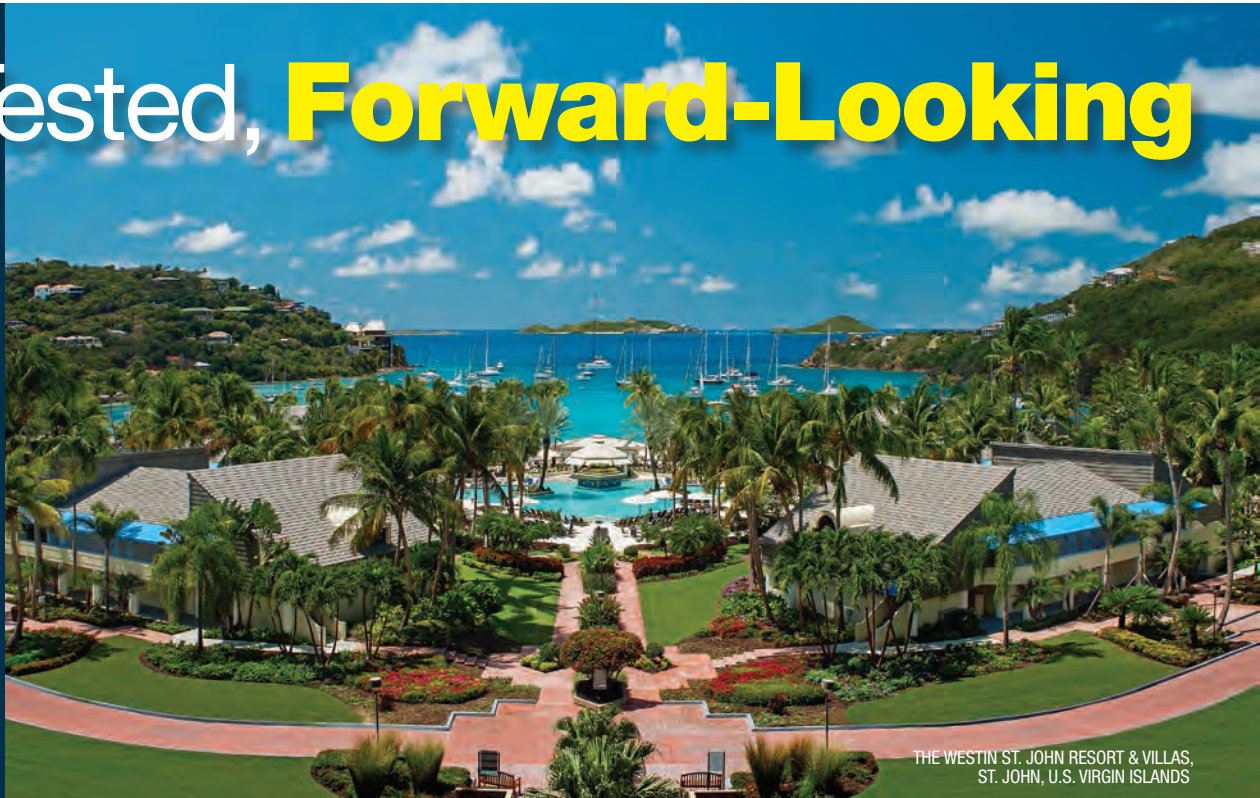
Units: Hotel rooms, studios, and one-bedroom suites

Website: marriottvacationclub.com/mvcpulse

Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, Google+

Time-Tested, **Forward-Looking**

It has been more than a year in the making, but the transformation of Starwood Vacation Ownership to **Vistana™ Signature Experiences** (Vistana) is an exciting milestone in the company's 36-year history.



THE WESTIN ST. JOHN RESORT & VILLAS, ST. JOHN, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS



SHERATON STEAMBOAT RESORT VILLAS, STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO



SHERATON KAUAI RESORT, KAUAI, HAWAII

With a recognized reputation for excellence and a history of delivering world-class vacations, Vistana has helped shape the vacation ownership industry since the beginning. Originally called Vistana when it opened its doors in 1980, the company was acquired by Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc., in 1999, and later renamed Starwood Vacation Ownership.

Since 2001, Starwood Vacation Ownership has built upon its collection of villa resorts under the Sheraton® and Westin® brands with expansions in sought-after destinations including Hawaii, Arizona, and Mexico, so it was well-positioned for growth. By 2015, more than 220,000 families had become owners.

In May 2016, Starwood Vacation Ownership completed a successful spin-off from Starwood Hotels & Resorts, and was acquired by ILG and renamed Vistana Signature Experiences. Through its exclusive license agreements with regard to vacation ownership, the company continues to maintain and develop products — primarily Sheraton- and Westin-branded resorts.

Today, Vistana is a premier provider of upper-upscale leisure travel and vacation ownership products, with resorts in the most desirable destinations throughout the continental U.S., Hawaii, Mexico, and the Caribbean. Through the Vistana Signature Network™, owners can

experience 20 Sheraton Vacation Club and Westin Vacation Club villa resorts.

By leveraging highly recognizable brands, plus offering new buyers Gold status in the industry-leading Starwood Preferred Guest® (SPG®) program, Vistana drives value for customers by delivering exceptional levels of service and programming that are unique to the brands and distinct in the market.

“As we seamlessly integrate our two companies, Vistana will continue to be a leading developer and operator of high-quality, branded vacation resorts in some of the most desirable locations,” says Steve Williams, chief operating officer of Vistana. “Our owners will benefit from continued relationships with Sheraton, Westin, and SPG, and receive even more of the valuable benefits and award-winning branded experiences that they’ve come to know and enjoy.”

New Construction on Maui

Vistana is poised to keep growing by adding a third villa resort on Maui's famed Kaanapali Beach, by expanding its existing developments within its current portfolio, and by acquiring five Sheraton and Westin resort hotels for future timeshare development.

In 2015, Vistana announced the construction of The Westin Nanea

Ocean Villas. Building on the success of the company's existing Westin-branded villa resorts on Kaanapali Beach, the goal of this new offering is to provide owners and guests an authentic experience that celebrates the island's rich history and traditions. Slated to open in May 2017, The Westin Nanea Ocean Villas will be situated on 16 oceanfront acres (6.5 hectares) next to an undeveloped 10-acre (4 hectares) public park.



THE WESTIN ST. JOHN RESORT & VILLAS

Infused with a variety of culturally inspired Hawaiian design elements, resort amenities will include a 10,000-square-foot (929 square meters) lagoon-style swimming pool with an upper pool, children's beach pool and play area, two plunge pools, three oceanfront cabanas, and a WestinWORKOUT® Fitness Studio.

Mauka Makai, a full-service restaurant, will offer breathtaking ocean views and an enticing menu of authentic Hawaiian and international cuisine, plus the Westin brand's signature SuperFoodsRx™ menu. Inu Pool Bar will provide a relaxing setting to enjoy oceanfront views, cocktails, and lighter fare.

Each time guests visit, they will be treated to an immersive Hawaiian experience. Because 90 percent of Hawaii's native plants are unique to the islands, the resort will feature a botanical landscape of lush foliage, with many opportunities for education and exploration. Guests will also find cultural programming focused on local history, arts and crafts, music, and dance at the on-site Pu'uhonua Cultural Center.

"The Westin Nanea Ocean Villas is a highly anticipated addition to the Vistana Signature Experiences portfolio," says Williams. "We have worked closely with Hawaiian cultural experts on the resort's design and offerings."

New Luxury Villas on St. John

In order to provide more products to customers in high-demand destinations, Vistana began a multimillion-dollar renovation project. Enhancements to The Westin St. John Resort & Villas, on the island of St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands, encompass the resort's guestrooms, dining facilities, meeting space, pool area, and more. It also includes the conversion of hotel rooms to luxury villas.

The refurbishment began with the conversion of 79 guestrooms into 52 vacation ownership units called Coral Vista Villas. The new accommodations introduced 30 two-bedroom villas, six two-bedroom lofts, and 18 studio villas to the property. Scheduled to

open in January 2017, Sunset Bay Villas is the conversion of the resort's remaining 96 poolside rooms.

Owners will continue to enjoy the resort's private 1,200-foot (366 meters) white-sand beach, miles of trails, sailing, snorkeling, a charming shopping district, and all the beauty of the island.

"The Westin St. John Resort & Villas is one of the most successful resorts in the Caribbean," says Williams. "As the resort and the on-site vacation ownership continue to play a pivotal role in St. John's expansive tourism market, we are thrilled to enhance our presence and commitment to the island."

Five New Resorts

Adding to its collection of upscale resorts, Vistana welcomed five new resort hotels as part of the spinoff: The Westin Los Cabos Resort Villas & Spa, which is scheduled to reopen in the second quarter of 2017, after renovations following Hurricane Odile; The Westin Resort & Spa, Cancún; The Westin Resort & Spa, Puerto Vallarta; Sheraton Kauai Resort; and Sheraton Steamboat Resort. These properties are anticipated to provide additional villa accommodations over time.

Vistana continues its commitment to empower travelers to expand their horizons and seek out new destinations.

Vistana's ability to view the world and its opportunities in exciting new ways is just one attribute that draws the admiration of David Gilbert, president of Interval International. "Vistana is truly one of the industry's trailblazers," he says. "We're proud to have been affiliated with Vistana since 2000, when they were acquired by Starwood. As they continue to grow and offer new high-quality resorts, this means more great inventory for Interval members, bringing all of us shared ongoing success." []

fastfacts

Vistana Signature Experiences

Headquarters: Orlando, Florida

Resorts: 20 timeshare resorts, including award-winning properties in top vacation destinations such as Hawaii, Orlando, Mexico, and the Caribbean

Owners: More than 220,000 families

Associates: Approximately 5,000

Website: vistana.com

Social Media: Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, Twitter

VILLA RESORT COLLECTION

THE VISTANA SIGNATURE NETWORK FEATURES A COLLECTION OF OUTSTANDING VILLA RESORTS.

Sheraton Vacation Club Villa Resorts

- Sheraton Desert Oasis, Scottsdale, Arizona
- Sheraton Mountain Vista, Avon, Colorado
- Sheraton Steamboat Resort Villas, Steamboat Springs, Colorado
- Sheraton PGA Vacation Resort, Port St. Lucie, Florida
- Sheraton Vistana Resort, Orlando, Florida
- Sheraton Vistana Villages, Orlando, Florida
- Sheraton Broadway Plantation, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Westin Vacation Club Villa Resorts

- The Westin Kierland Villas, Scottsdale, Arizona
- The Westin Desert Willow Villas, Palm Desert, California
- The Westin Mission Hills Resort & Villas, Rancho Mirage, California
- The Westin Riverfront Mountain Villas, Avon, Colorado
- The Westin Ka'anapali Ocean Resort Villas, Maui, Hawaii
- The Westin Ka'anapali Ocean Resort Villas North, Maui, Hawaii
- The Westin Nanea Ocean Villas, Maui, Hawaii, opening in 2017
- The Westin Princeville Ocean Resort Villas, Kauai, Hawaii

- The Westin Lagunamar Ocean Resort, Cancún, Mexico
- The Westin St. John Resort & Villas, St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands

Independent Branded Villa Resorts

- Lakeside Terrace, Avon, Colorado
- Vistana Beach Club, Jensen Beach, Florida
- Harborside Resort at Atlantis, Paradise Island, The Bahamas

Fractional Residences and Resort Hotels

- The Phoenician Residences, The Luxury Collection Residence Club, Scottsdale, Arizona
- Sheraton Steamboat Resort, Steamboat Springs, Colorado
- St. Regis Residence Club, Aspen, Colorado
- Sheraton Kauai Resort, Kauai, Hawaii
- The St. Regis Residence Club, New York, New York
- The Westin Los Cabos Resort Villas & Spa, Los Cabos, Mexico
- The Westin Resort & Spa, Cancún, Mexico
- The Westin Resort & Spa, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

By Catherine Lackner



A Fundamental Focus on Fun



Since the beloved *Lawrence Welk Show* debuted in the 1950s, the Welk name has been synonymous with entertainment. Now, a new chapter is unfolding.

Two years ago, Welk Resort Group, known for its focus on guest experiences, created a new position — chief *fun* officer — and hired Patrick Dolan to oversee innovative guest programming across all properties.

“My goal is to create unique, meaningful events that connect our guests with each other, our locations, and our brand,” Dolan says. “This includes developing a program of experiences that our guests can find nowhere else.”

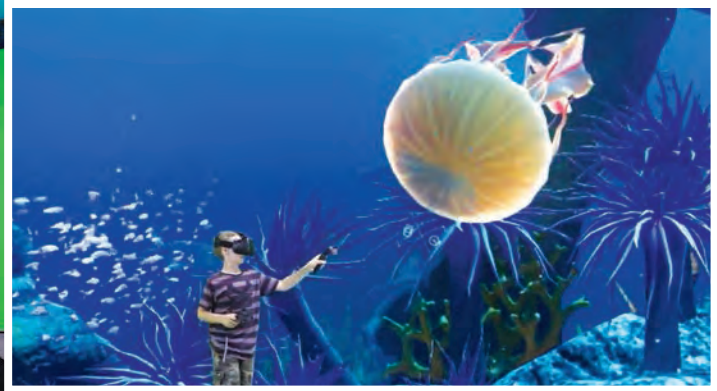
But programming isn’t Welk’s only focus of late: The company is developing new resorts in Breckenridge, Colorado, and Kauai, Hawaii. “We are on target with our plans, and anticipate strong, sustained growth in the foreseeable future as we capitalize on physical and experiential improvements, and the incredible foundation of quality for which our brand is known,” says Jon Fredricks, Welk Resort Group president and CEO.

Birth of a “CFO”

The decision to create the chief fun officer position wasn’t made lightly, Glen Clinton, Welk’s senior vice president of resort operations recalls. “Jon and I were having a philosophical, ‘what if?’ discussion about the guest experience. At the time, we had traditional activities and programs; there’s nothing wrong with that. But because we want to own the activities segment, we want to do what no one else is doing.”

The hunt was on. “We cast a wide net,” Clinton says, interviewing candidates with solid hospitality backgrounds and impressive credentials. “And then there was Patrick.”

Clinton met Dolan at a nearby Starbucks. “He came to that meeting with a proposal to take us to the next level,” Clinton says. “He looks at life differently, and I can’t say enough great things about him. He elevates the guest experience in ways we couldn’t have imagined.”



As part of INSPIRED Studios, guests at Welk's San Diego resort can produce their own green-screen video.

An Unconventional Path

"I took a very untraditional path," Dolan says. "In college, I worked in a snowboard park in Utah's Wasatch Mountains." After graduating from the University of Utah with an environmental science degree, he traveled the globe with his surfboard to New Zealand, Peru, Costa Rica, Fiji, Indonesia, and Europe.

"I experienced diverse cultures, landscapes, resort amenities, and hospitality practices. I always traveled solo and worked along the way, mostly at resorts, hostels, and restaurants. I was on a full-immersion mission to cultivate experiences, and it's that part of my background that landed me this position."

Dolan was hired in December 2014. "We had tremendous success in 2015, winning the Clarabridge Customer Experience Innovation Award, as well as being nominated for an ARDA award for best activities program," he says.

An Inspired Plan

Early last year, Welk Resorts launched INSPIRED For You, a brand-wide portfolio that mixes tried-and-true programming with off-site adventures and new games and activities.

"It's based on the local landscape and culture, although there are core experiences at all resorts," Dolan says. "We change INSPIRED For You activities every season and take into account owner demographics, weather changes, and historical participation levels."

In Tahoe this past winter, for example, he reports that they piloted the Ride With a Local experience. "We take our snowboard and ski enthusiasts — skilled riders only — to the best back-country mountain terrain. This takes their time on the mountain to a whole new level."

Game of Drones is a popular tech event. "We have drone fleets at every resort," Dolan says. Guests learn flight basics, take their skills to an outdoor obstacle course, and graduate with a pilot's certificate.

And at the San Diego resort, Dolan launched INSPIRED Studios, where guests can test-drive virtual-reality equipment, compete in lip-sync battles, take movie and photography classes, create digital comic books, rent and play musical instruments, and produce green-screen video and photography shoots.

Something for Everyone

Spy Camp teaches kids how to make pinhole cameras out of their teddy bears, and perform audio surveillance with sound dishes and aerial surveillance with drones. Multigenerational activities are an important focus of Dolan's programming strategy. "Families want to spend meaningful time together, so we have created a number of team-building events that keep all ages engaged."

In Cupcake Wars, families team up to decorate a giant cupcake, then create a company to market it, including a slogan, commercial, and packaging. "The families get a copy of their commercial to take home. During the summer, it's not uncommon to have 10 families competing during a single 90-minute event."

New Features, New Resorts

Capital improvements bolster the new programming. At the San Diego resort, for example, a 6,000-square-foot (557 square meters) state-of-the-art fitness center with a two-story rock-climbing wall, indoor and outdoor strength training, aerobics equipment, spas, saunas, and a variety of classes were added. And recreational offerings were enhanced with pickleball, a new sports court, basketball zone, sand volleyball, more cabanas, an amphitheater, a movie theater, and barbecue areas.

Construction has begun on the multiphase Breckenridge resort, reminiscent of a historic mining homestead. "First occupancy of our 123-villa resort will be in 2018," says Fredricks. The Vail Resorts-managed ski area is one of the best in Colorado, its mountain-biking terrain is unparalleled, and there is fly-fishing and a 40-mile (64 kilometers) paved bike path adjacent to the resort.

"This will be one of the first resorts Breckenridge visitors experience as they enter town, so paying tribute to the mining heritage was well-received," Fredricks adds.

The Poipu, Kauai, resort will open in phases starting in 2020, Fredricks reports. The 164-villa ocean-view resort on 21 acres (8.5 hectares) is a short walk to the internationally acclaimed Poipu Beach, restaurants, shops, and a golf course. The Hawaiian plantation-style resort will incorporate lava-rock water features and foundation walls from structures existing hundreds of years ago, and a beach-entry lagoon-style pool.

"We are creating an innovative villa design with terrace dining, outdoor showers, outdoor living room environments, and open floor plans that create the *aloha* feeling," Fredricks says. "It will have the feel of an old Hawaiian resort." A viewing deck next to the preview center and a topological table replicate the original village.

Through it all, however, the guest experience is paramount. "I have a very clear vision," Dolan says. "Incredible moments are waiting if we are brave enough to seek them. It's my hope that these moments will resonate with guests long after they check out." []

Catherine Lackner, based in Miami, Florida, writes for newspapers, magazines, and various other media, and has been covering the vacation ownership industry for 11 years.

fastfacts

Welk Resort Group

Developer: Welk Resort Group, Inc., Jon Fredricks, president and CEO

Headquarters: San Marcos, California

Product: Primarily points-based with some fixed-week, fixed-unit

Resorts: **San Diego:** Welk Resorts San Diego (comprising Mountain Villas, Resort Villas, and Villas on the Greens) **Palm Springs:** Welk Resort Palm Springs **Lake Tahoe:** Northstar Lodge by Welk Resorts **Branson:** The Lodges at Timber Ridge, Welk Resorts **Cabo San Lucas:** Sirena del Mar

Website: welkresorts.com

Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest

By Kathy Hernandez



100-PERCENT MEXICAN BY DESIGN

In a privileged location of sand and sea, overlooking the spectacular Sea of Cortez, the five-diamond **Hacienda Encantada Resort & Spa** in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, emerges as both unique and larger than life in its 100-percent Mexican approach to luxury, design, and service.



Charming and enchanting, as its name in Spanish implies, the opulent resort is designed to emulate the large, stately Mexican haciendas of Mexico's revolutionary era, but with a contemporary twist amidst the spectacular beauty and splendor of Mexico's Baja California Sur.

Only in Cabo can visitors see the region's signature Land's End stone arch, and experience a diverse array of luxurious and adventurous activities such as deep-sea fishing, snorkeling, diving, whale-watching, boating, yachting, zip-lining, ATV cycling on the sand dunes, golfing on numerous championship golf courses, dancing the night away, and so much more.

Tradition and Originality All in One

At Hacienda Encantada, resort common areas feature Talavera Mexican tile murals and Spanish colonial fountains, while accommodations feature rich accents in earth tones, luxurious hand-embroidered pillows, and woven textile rugs. Handmade wooden furniture, traditional paintings, and vibrant artwork — all by Mexican artisans — can be found in every corner of the resort and in every unit. The combination of elegance, modernity, and distinct designs creates a warm atmosphere with all the comforts of home.



“This is our signature look and signature identity. It’s what makes our experience for thousands of members so special,” explains Gabriel Macías Dueñas, president and CEO of Mexico Grand Hotels, the development company for Hacienda Encantada. The Macías family, whose roots are in Guadalajara, Mexico, also own and operate other properties in Cabo and Puerto Vallarta.

According to Macías, Hacienda Encantada has proudly chosen Interval International as its exclusive affiliate for its thousands of members, due to Interval’s quality of resorts and selective affiliates.

“We are also extremely pleased to offer our members the opportunity to exchange into this high-quality property,” says Marcos Agostini, senior vice president of resort sales and service for Interval International. “Hacienda Encantada Resort & Spa is clearly deserving of its Interval International Elite status — the very highest level of our Resort Recognition program.”

A Formula for Success

What started as a dream — with the beginning of construction just a little more than 10 years ago, the opening of the resort in 2005, and the offering of a timeshare product in 2007 — has succeeded into an ongoing expansion plan, now with 222 units ranging from studios to multibedroom suites and villas. The Western U.S. is a key market, with many members coming from California, Oregon, Arizona, and Texas. The sprawling resort strengthens communications on a day-to-day basis to maintain member loyalty through the use of social media, email marketing, in-house programs, referrals, and external fly-buys. New strategies will soon be implemented to capitalize on the local, Mexican market.

This past summer, Hacienda Encantada opened its newest and third phase called Encanto de la Hacienda, offering 72 multiple-bedroom accommodations and amenities. The suites with two, three, and four bedrooms, located on the fourth, fifth, and sixth floors of a six-floor building, each have personal plunge pools on their balconies.

The grand opening of Encanto de la Hacienda was a major event for the region and for Mexico, attended by the secretary of tourism for Baja California Sur and representatives from Mexico’s secretary of tourism.

A Local Flair

The most luxurious category of accommodations, The Residences, gives members and guests a personal connection to the history of the Baja peninsula. Each villa has the name of a different historic mission from Baja, and features contemporary Mexican hacienda design with three bedrooms, a spiral staircase to the second floor, private recreational space, a swimming pool and bar on the first-floor patio, plus a

barbecue area, hot tub, fire pit, and complete service of a private butler and chef.

“I believe we can attribute the success of our 100-percent Mexican approach in product, service, and amenities to very specific factors,” says Macías. “We have always been committed to being in the forefront of Mexican design and decor with a continual improvement and evolution of that, along with excellence in service and product. Along the way, we have taken great care to develop our people and achieve loyalty to the product and experience that only we can offer.”

All-Inclusive Exclusiveness Meets Health and Well-Being

Another point of distinction by design for Hacienda Encantada is its Dine Out With Privileges all-inclusive program, which gives members the opportunity to not only enjoy the resort’s specialty restaurants, but also enables them to sample a variety of local restaurants within the Cabo San Lucas Marina Golden Zone, with transportation included. It’s totally unique in the area and in the industry, says Macías.

Yet another standout resort feature is the Holistic Spa, which allows members and guests to relax, rejuvenate, and re-establish a link between physical and spiritual health. In addition to more than 20 relaxing and enriching spa treatments, the spa facility also offers a meditation approach to health and wellness through energy and light, and the native health ritual of Temazcal, originating in early Mexican culture, which uses steam to bring in cleansing elements of earth, fire, wind, and water.

Accolades in the Making

The resort’s creativity in blending luxury with local touches has not gone unnoticed. Hacienda Encantada was ranked the fifth Best Resort of Mexico Pacific for the Condé Nast Traveler Readers Choice Awards in 2014, among the Top 20 in 2015, and has been nominated again by readers to be in the running for 2016.

“This tells us we are on track with our vision and core values to offer members and guests the highest quality of service in a friendly manner, thereby delivering the best vacation experience of their life. This is who we are and this is our tradition,” says Macías.

Keeping It Going

The goal is to keep growing on that success. In 2017, Hacienda Encantada will be opening its fourth phase, with even more options of high-end accommodations and amenities. One hundred-percent Mexican local luxury is on a roll. []

fastfacts

Hacienda Encantada Resort & Spa

Developer: Mexico Grand Hotels

Location: Cabo San Lucas, Baja California Sur, Mexico

Product: Right-to-use, fixed, and floating weeks

Units: 222, including studio suites, one-, two-, three-, and four-bedrooms

Price: From US\$12,000 to US\$87,000

Website: haciendaencantada.com

Social Media: Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube

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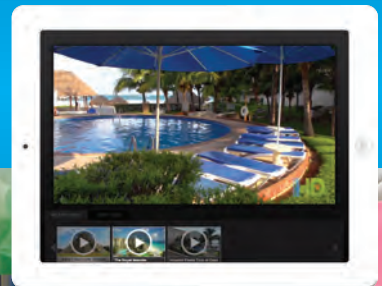
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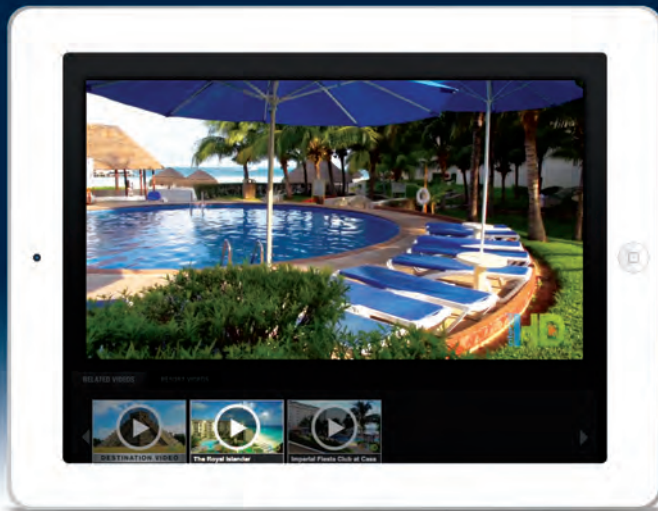
Keeping Resorts Competitive in the Digital Age

DG Film Company, a full-service production company with more than 17 years of experience — including the creation of customized resort presentations worldwide — has joined the Interval Affiliate Advantages program.

- DG Film Company offers professional film presentations that meet clients' marketing needs while remaining within budget
- Resorts are showcased in a captivating style, incorporating creative video elements that appeal to clients' target audiences
- Website videos boost Internet search results and increase the rate of viewer response

For a two- to three-minute showcase video, participating resorts will receive preferential pricing on the following:

- Script development, including music and narration
- On-location filming of interiors, exteriors, amenities, or other aspects of the resort or destination
- Interviews with resort representatives and owners
- Aerial and underwater shots
- Video optimization for the Internet and master DVD for in-house application



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Resort video footage can be included on Interval HD at IntervalWorld.com.

Sample videos can be found at dggilmco.com. See how DG Film Company can help achieve crucial marketing goals for your resort property. Contact the company at 435.674.1133 or by email at Production@dggilmco.com.





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To learn more, contact **Kerri Luther**, national director of business development, at Timeshare@fnf.com.



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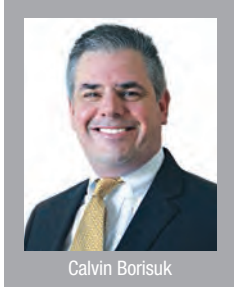
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To learn more, contact:
Chris Rogers, vice president,
800.257.7858, ext. 4459; Cr Rogers@harborlinen.com
Tammy Zarrilli, sales executive,
800.257.7858, ext. 4413; Tzarrilli@harborlinen.com



Calvin Borisuk

Calvin Borisuk has been named national director of sales and local marketing for Hyatt Vacation Ownership. Based at HVO's headquarters in St. Petersburg, Florida, Borisuk is responsible for developing sales and local marketing strategies, and oversees the planning and execution of all related initiatives for main-

land Hyatt Residence Club resorts. For the past 25 years, he has led timeshare sales for some of the industry's most successful properties. Prior to joining HVO, he served as director of sales for Sheraton Broadway Plantation in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

King's Creek Plantation Chooses Equiant for Loan Servicing

King's Creek Plantation LLC of Williamsburg, Virginia, has selected Equiant to service its mortgage loan and maintenance-fee receivables. "Once we saw what was possible with their technology and how that translates into significantly better information for us and for our owners, Equiant was the logical choice," says Joe Cantrell, King's Creek Plantation's executive vice president of finance and chief financial officer.

Equiant stores all customer data at a Tier IV Gold data center, considered the most secure facility in the U.S., and also has the technology to facilitate electronic processing of documents and loan servicing. Equiant's new Platform as a Service (PaaS) model allows clients to service their accounts in-house, using the industry's most advanced technology.



Rob Millisor Heart Health Walk Generates \$200,000 in Contributions

More than 1,000 participants made their way along the trails and streets of Breckenridge, Colorado, during the inaugural Rob Millisor Heart Health Walk, which took place in June 2016. The resulting contributions reached nearly US\$200,000, of which 100 percent was contributed to the Rob Millisor Heart Health Fund at The Summit Foundation. The event paid tribute to the late Breckenridge Grand Vacations (BGV) owner and developer, Rob Millisor, who passed away from a heart attack in October 2015 while on a humanitarian trip to help earthquake victims in Nepal.

"Helping others was Rob's true passion, inspiring the formation of BGV Gives," states Mike Millisor, BGV owner and developer — and Rob's brother. "His legacy of giving will live on in the community in many ways, including this walk."

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