

Spotlight – Guy Crawford – Glenn Pushelberg – Away-night: La Mamounia, Marrakech – Rest of the news – And ...

SPOTLIGHT

The first **ILTM ultra.travel Awards**, celebrating favourite experiences around the world, are out – and the winners are (roll the drums), Europe - Red Travel, Italia in Ferrari, Italy; Middle East – Jumeirah Bab Al Shams Desert Resort and Spa, Dubai; Africa – Singita Game Reserves; Asia Pacific – Aman at Summer Palace, Beijing, China; Americas – Explora Atacama Desert, Chile. Debbie Joslin, ILTM Show Director and Nick Perry, Chairman of Ultratravel Limited and www.ultra.travel, are absolutely thrilled with the response. The competition was announced at the beginning of October and voting came in, via www.iltm.net and from a number of consumers on www.ultra.travel who truly appreciate the value of a luxury experience • Apollo 11 Astronaut **Buzz Aldrin** handed over the awards. He has travelled outside the world that the rest of us know, and he recently received the US Congressional Gold Medal from President Obama (Aldrin's versatility is shown by his rap single, Rocket Experience, recorded with Snoop Dogg and Quincy Jones, for his foundation ShareSpace). Inviting him to Cannes, to last night's **ILTM Ultravel Forum**, was a stroke of genius on the part of that true lover of all things luxury, the above-mentioned Nick Perry. For the Forum, he chose two panel discussions, Keeping Luxury Relevant in Today's Market, moderated by New York-based Nancy Novogrod, Editor-in-Chief, Travel+Leisure, and The Future of Luxury Travel, moderated by London-based Graham Boynton, Group Travel Editor, Telegraph Media Group • See more from the Forum in Wednesday's and Thursday's Gostelow Report Live, exclusive to the 1,227 participating companies and hosted buyers from over 70 countries, including this year, for the first time, travel professionals from Iceland. Yes, this is ILTM 2009.

GUY CRAWFORD CEO Jumeirah Group

Jumeirah continues to excite, says one of the Forum's top speakers. Its latest pipeline announcement is Jumeirah Los Faros de Panama, a 400-key luxury hotel in the three towers being designed by architects Chapman Taylor and Humberto Echeverria and Associates in Panama's central San Francisco district. The central tower will be 85 floors, and the other two 75 floors • Jumeirah – Stay Different is the philosophy of this Dubai-based group. What does this mean? Each of the 11 already-open operations is unique, from the in-desert Bab Al Shams, with camels passing your window, to the iconic Burj Al Arab (no need even to describe that one, it is now as famous as the Eiffel Tower and Sydney Opera House. and Federer and Tiger have not played their respective sports off a cantilevered 22nd-floor helipad at either of those). But each and every property in the portfolio is bound by Jumeirah's quality of service and the consistent hallmarks, communicated to all 10,000 employees, of greeting guests before they greet you, first response to a guest enquiry must never be no, and the vital factor of treating colleagues with integrity.

The luxury travel market has been less affected than other sectors, says Crawford, and Jumeirah continues to see significant growth in demand from its key feeders. Out of Asia, growth from China is phenomenal. This will be helped, too, by the opening of the 309-key Jumeirah HanTang Xintiandi, Shanghai, which should now happen in 2010 – GM Akram Touma, whom many remember from his days at Le Royal Méridien, Shanghai, is already onboard • Guy Crawford has strong leaders at all his hotels. In New York, VP/GM Gary Schweikert is back in town, in charge of Jumeirah Essex House. In London, Derek Picot, who heads Jumeirah Carlton Tower, knows the UK capital like the proverbial back of his hand. Dagmar Woodward, one of the most stylish GMs on the international circuit, will be opening the 219-key Jumeirah Frankfurt, on track for opening in the third quarter of 2010. This will be a sensational product, built around the former city palace of the royal house of Thurn and Taxis: interiors are by Peter Silling and Super Potato, and it is right next both to the Frankfurt stock exchange and also amazing retail. Yes, says Guy Crawford, a few years ago, in his Trust House Forte days, he helped make Edinburgh hot at New Year by creating Hogmanay packages, and now, with Jumeirah, he will similarly put Frankfurt on the luxury pleasure map • This is a Scotsman who wants value for his money, which includes maximizing time with his wife and kids. His company is serious when it comes to recognizing every guest's preferences. Sirius loyalty cardholders know their idiosyncrasies will be known by tomorrow's hotels, and a phone line, even to him, is open 13 hours a day (GMT+4), seven days a week (+971-4 364 7500).

GLENN PUSHELBERG director Yabu Pushelberg designers

What is the immediate future of luxury design? Colour, says this futurist (does he really like funky fuchsia?). Hygiene is another coming buzz-word, by which he means a growing backlash against carpets. Bathrooms, which seem to be taking up more and more of the overall room space, need more obvious wet and dry areas. Yabu Pushelberg design is constantly evolving, but contrarily it is also timeless: open any page of the stunning book Yabu Pushelberg, by William Norwich, October 2009, and you cannot tell what is 2009 vintage, or what dates back to 1980, when the partnership with George Yabu was established • Yabu Pushelberg does residential, restaurants (think Peter, Tokyo), and retail (Louis Vuitton, Tiffany) – but today 70% is for hotels. Barry Sternlicht met with Glenn Pushelberg and said 'do me W Times Square, New York, in ten months', a Herculean task since most projects take two to four years, beginning to end. Anyway, immediately after New York Richard Li commissioned the company to stun the world with Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo at Marunouchi (was this the first hotel to have its reception on the top floor, bedrooms beneath?). Now their portfolio is worldwide. Coming up are an Edition in Honolulu, Four Seasons in New York Financial Center and Toronto, Grand Hyatt Moscow, Park Hyatt New York and Waldorf Astoria Beijing. The 90-strong team works in New York and Toronto, though Glenn Pushelberg himself is constantly on the road. Running through airports in his retro Nikes, indeed, is one of his main ways of keeping fit. Off-duty, he may cycle along the Hudson River, followed by Jean-Georges Vongerichten's halibut or a Daniel Boulud burger, or trawl antique shops on Paris' Left Bank (after which comes hot chocolate at Angelina, near The Dorchester Collection's Le Meurice) or the back streets in Aoyama, Tokyo (and saké chosen by the Matsushita brothers at Matsugen, Daikanyama).

AWAY-NIGHT La Mamounia, Marrakech

The 1922 palace was officially re-opened November 26th, 2009 – and it is gorgeous, thanks to designer Jacques Garcia and VP/GM Didier Picquot. I was greeted by a guard of honour in haute couture: the entire 770-strong team is custom-clad by Paris-based duo Patricia Castre and Marie France Croyeau. The front lobby, a gallery of polished marble and crystal, leads to the Majorelle Gallery, named for its carpet-like painted ceiling (Jacques Majorelle, 1947), and on, to the main garden, all 13 acres of it, with 300-year olive trees, tall-tall palms, fruiting citrus trees, and paths raked by a 64-strong army of gardeners. Here are tennis courts (Henri Leconte, no less), a giant Technogym and, outside, a 120x120 ft heated pool.

Back inside the 209-key hotel (plus a trio of three-room riads), you sense Garcia at every turn. A side gallery is broken up, by curtains, into small areas, a reminder of the Metropole in Monte-Carlo. The French restaurant's pale salmon fabric chandeliers are his version of typical red and clear glass Moroccan lanterns – but Garcia has given 'waists' to his shades, in homage to Dior's New Look, and yes, there is a full-size black and white photo of a 1947 mannequin outside the Dior boutique, one the luxury brands here. This is, indeed, a hotel for all senses, says Didier Picquot. Sculptures include a giant anthropomorphic figure, Morocco, one of Les Enfants du Monde by Rachid Khimoune for the 21st century. Music throughout is devised by Alexandre Sauty de Chalon and Jérôme Maître of time4play.fr and in-house aromas, of dates and cedar wood, are by Olivia Giacobetti • The hotel closed in June 2006, and up to 1,500 artisans then worked 24/7. You continually gasp in amazement. Upper corridors have burgundy-painted wood ceilings, with electric flare-lights, and, on the third floor, black and whites photos of Morocco by Saad Tazi. By each dark wood door is a back-lit metal fret panel with the room number. Your sensor keycard is in a brown leather wallet, to keep. Executive suite 310, with 1.5 bathrooms and big-big shady balconies looking into palm trees, and the gardens, has equal sized (15x15 ft) salon and bedroom. I marvel at the fine local tilework, and hand-carved white stone fretwork friezes, walls that look like Venetian ragging, the salon's elaborately-painted sage-coloured wood ceiling with a hanging fretwork copper light. The minibar has a choice of waters, plus Ruinart and Taittinger. I love the (Hermès) orange, television zapper and laundry box covers, and closet drawers. I collapse into bed, with its clouds of white Porthault, sleep through a pre-dawn chorus of local muezzin calls, and wake to birdsong. I shower (Olivia Giacobetti toiletries). To breakfast, at Le Pavillon de la Piscine, outside, poolside, at a glass-topped table, white JL Coquet porcelain, Peugeot grinders. A dedicated buffet room has one of the world's best-ever homemade spreads – yoghurt topped with mango purée, breads studded with apricot or walnuts, butter from 250g Beurre Echiré tubs... While being poured yet another coffee by a server in a cruise-type outfit of white trousers, blue blazer, I thought about the French, Italian and Moroccan restaurants, the padded-leather Churchill bar, the two-floor spa and indoor pool. But a Range Rover waited. A posse of bosses in discreet striped business suits waved me away.

REST OF THE NEWS – LIVE

Yesterday, Vancouver-based **Kiwi Collection Inc** announced its partnership with Visa Inc. As Kiwi Collection President Philippe Kjellgren says, the world's largest credit card company has put together the most superior hotel programme. The Visa Luxury Hotel Collection, debuting February 2010, will allow access to all cardholders, although only Visa Premium cardholders can book directly and enjoy benefits and the Visa concierge service.

Travel agents will find, says Kjellgren, that the Visa Luxury Hotel Collection has been designed specifically with them in mind: they can sign up, for free, and retain all the subsequent commission. Hotels will be delighted that, unlike some other programmes, working with Visa Luxury Hotel Collection is complimentary. There is no fee to be part of what will be the largest exposure the hotel world has ever known. Hotels must be already working with Kiwi Collection, they must be on the GDS, with the Visa rate loaded • Kiwi Collection now has over 2,100 tested properties, from four-room ryokans to several-thousand-keys in Vegas. Kjellgren says the Visa Luxury Hotel Collection will launch with about 700 hotels, and he plans a minimum of 1,000 worldwide. This is, he says, a win-win - for consumers, travel professionals, independents, and brands and consortia. Kiwi Collection works closely with such groups, including Design Hotels, Leading Hotels of the World and Relais & Châteaux, and many of their top officers are on its advisory board.

Amerigo Perasso, President **Silversea Cruises**, says Silver Spirit in-room aroma can be personalised, from a choice of Laura Tonatto fragrances. Its inaugural voyage, from Fort Lauderdale January 21, 2010, will be in Rio for Carnaval • James McBride, at his first ILTM as President **YTL Hotels & Resorts**, says he just 'had' to be here; YTL owns the soon-to-open 16-room The Muse, St-Tropez • **Wilderness Safaris**' WE ARE WILDERNESS (WAW) interactive site includes sharing of photos/videos, and blog-or-brag, or ask a question. Wilderness Safaris' young-outlook Safari & Adventure Co has Davison's Camp, Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe • In February 2010, **Virgin Limited Edition** adds the 105-ft, 10-passenger Necker Belle catamaran, Caribbean-based in winter, moving to the Mediterranean for the summer: week-long fully-provisioned charters • Luca Magni, step-son of the founding owner of **Baglioni Hotels**, Roberto Polito, is thrilled that the 1700-vintage, 24-room Relais Santa Croce, Florence, is now part of the 14-strong brand. Marrakech, opening 2011, will have Jade Jagger villas and a Six Senses spa. Brand leader Magni

spends half his time on Baglioni's OAid Africa, helping Ghana orphans • MPS Puri is overseeing the 36-acre, 61-key **Shanti Ananda**, Mauritius (810 sq ft-plus rooms, a 25-room, 18 holes of nearby Peter Matkovitch golf - and the resort GM is a charming ex-lawyer, Belgian Paul van Frank) • Anthony Lark, GM at 42-key **Trisara, Phuket**, says the five-year old is still the only resort in south-east Asia with 30-ft truly-private sea-facing infinity pools. Canadian John Dunbar is onboard as yoga-wellness master • At **The Peninsula Shanghai**, formally opening March 10th, 2010, Paul Tchen is at the helm – in June he took us to the 14th floor roof for topping-off with Peninsula-label bubbly. So much to admire here, 235 Rochon-designed rooms (wow, the 3,700 sq ft Palace Suite - its 2,000 sq ft terrace has amazing views along The Bund or across to Pudong), the two-floor Sir Elly's rooftop restaurant and, as of two days ago, Sunday tea-dances with an 18-piece band. There is an inhouse travel agency, and six-hour laundry is 24/7.

And: Tonight's **ILTM Official Party** at The Hotel Martinez, starts 8pm (you need your badge to get in): enjoy Extravaganza Martinis, Chivas and a glass, or more, from the Champagne Taittinger Cascade.

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