

**Spotlight – Paul James - Tom Storey - Away-night: The Ritz, Paris – Rest of the news – And ...**

### **SPOTLIGHT**

When the sun shines, where better to be than in Cannes, and whatever the weather, ILTM, underpinned by unrivalled serious business. Yves Wencker, Le Telfair, Mauritius, says the big players are here; Arnaud de Saint-Exupéry, ANdAZ, sees amazing quality of buyers (so much better than 'quantity', and realistic optimism for the future). Richard McGinnis Leading Hotels, says even more amazingly valuable than anticipated, will definitely be back in a big way next year.

Which Swedish royalty are already rushing to the stunning new Raison d'Etire Spa in the Grand, Stockholm, which we hear is one of Europe's best? Where do the king and queen of tennis like to stay in, respectively, the Maldives and New York (clue to the last one: a Leading Hotel of the World known partly for its two theatrical concierges and its would-she-were-my-best-friend female GM) • Where did Miss Universe stay last night? She inaugurated the sensuously-glamorous Suite des Oliviers here, at Le Martinez, bring-back 1929 style, satin-damask coverlet and wrap-round headboard, turquoise-lined white leather dressing table • Overheard: Peter Bates, Strategic Vision: we must educate clients away from last-minute (ILTM is successful because it is B2B, no consumers, plenty of space, serious business). Graham Boynton, Telegraph Group: luxury will hold up best but all suppliers must give outstanding value without cutting corners • What is the ultimate customer service? See Away-night, below.

### **PAUL JAMES global brand leader St Regis (and Luxury Collection)**

Two days ago St Regis opened the first ski-in ski-out hotel in North America that has its own funicular direct to town, and all its restaurants (the 181-key St Regis Resort & Residences, Deer Crest UT, GM Michael Hatzfeld). Yes, it has, company-style, a mural on one of the bar's walls, local art, a wine room with tastings, signature Bloody Marys, and slightly-relaxed butlers based on those at The Lanesborough, London. It also has a ski-beach with ski butlers, a spectacular Remède spa and food by Jean Georges Vongerichten. There are 19 St Regis properties, and only The Lanesborough, an institution in its own right, is unbranded – no, Paul James will not start a St Regis Collection: he has the sibling Luxury Collection.

Coming up in 2010 will be openings in Lhasa, Tibet; and Bangkok, Osaka and Mauritius. Expect local adaptations of all the St Regis signatures – the Bloody Mary in Osaka might well be typical Japanese simplicity, a clear liquor with a tiny Japanese tomato in it. St Regis is history and traditional, and oodles of international glamour, yesterday brought up to today. It is not only afternoon tea but midnight suppers (is it true that last week Paul James hosted a midnight supper at the St Regis, New York, for a couple of dozen of the Big Apple's brightest and best, of all ages, and the former Mrs Guy Ritchie stopped by and joined the party?)

### **TOM STOREY president Fairmont Hotels and Resorts**

Fairmont is far from cookie-cutter – it is a collection of unique properties, many iconic, says the hands-on leader who writes the foreword in guest directories in all 59 properties. The palette ranges from such historic properties as Fairmont San Francisco, where the UN was established, to the architectural wonder of IM Pei's Fairmont Singapore. The company gene, however, is caring professional service with warm engagement (worldwide, 50% of guests are repeats, and 99% of guest comments praise the service). Fairmont Famous invites travel professionals to experience the brand. Why not try a Marco Pierre White rib-eye in the new Fairmont Bab Al Bahr, Abu Dhabi? On the subject of food, Fairmont's sustainability philosophy includes a rigid Sustainable Seafood mantra, to avoid over-fished species. Fairmont arguably invented sustainability in the hotel world, with its industry-first of blue plastic bins for guests' paper garbage, and subsequent additional initiatives include bee-keeping, with highly-active hives first on a Fairmont Royal York, Toronto, rooftop, and now copied elsewhere.

Fairmont Pacific Rim, Vancouver, opens January. In the lower half of a 48-floor tower, its rooms look out over the living roof of the city's new convention centre to the harbour, and the mountains of North Vancouver beyond (the duplex Chairman's Suite, literally cantilevered over the water, is handy for the eighth floor outdoor pool). In London, The Savoy re-opens April 2010 after a magnificent Pierre-Yves Rochon renovation – GM Kieran MacDonald is working with Keith Yates, who has taken Etihad Airlines' First Class service up to supersonic levels and reputation, on service culture that aims to make every guest say WOW. In Shanghai, the 270-key Fairmont Peace Hotel, where Noel Coward finished *Private Lives*, opens in plenty of time for the 2010 World Expo (hotel GM, Kamal Naamani); choose the 3,000 sq ft Sassoon Suite, or anything with access to the eighth floor Fairmont Gold lounge. The 1,000-room Makkah Fairmont will be the most significant hotel in the Muslim world. Coming up too are such destinations as Corfu, Haitang Bay, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kiev, Manila, Marrakech, Monterey, Muscat, Punta Cana and Vail. Tom Storey hopes to announce Moscow soon, and his wish-list includes, in alphabetical order, Hong Kong, Milan, Mumbai and Paris • Tom Storey sees Fairmont continuing to keep abreast of changing consumer needs, and to personalize his guests' experiences. Fairmont Fit, a partnership with Adidas, means members of Fairmont President's Club, can have complimentary right-size work out gear, including shoes, ready for their stay. In Canada, Club members have complimentary access to BMW X5 35d Sport Activity Vehicles. Globally, the Club has 1.5 million members, and correct execution of in-system personal requests, say pillow-type, is near perfect, says the president himself. Yes, he is proud of the job done not only by Fairmont Gold lounge personnel but all 30,000 employees worldwide • His own first job in the industry, by the way, was as a strategic planning analyst with Marriott (with a Economics degree, and an MBA from Cornell, hotels seemed much more exciting than banking, he admits). He joined Fairmont in 2001, and became president April 2008.

### **AWAY-NIGHT The Ritz, Paris**

As the Eurostar pulled in at Gare du Nord a bellboy in Ritz Blue waited, and within a few minutes the Mercedes S-Class pulled up in Place Vendôme (the 159-room hotel is distinguished from Discreet Neighbours by four cream blinds, and a guard of honour of eight spiral topiaris). GM Omer Acar, the epitome of Turkish

attention to quality, miraculously appeared, as was to happen continually. We passed a black-and-white-clad maid in Louboutins • The 820 sq ft suite 417 has a marble foyer, salon and bedroom with tall French windows facing over Terrace Vendôme to the Justice Ministry, and 1.5 bathrooms. Pierre-Yves Rochon's creation is a Queen Mother symphony of power-blues and greys, and old gold, with ormolu accessories. The huge arrangement of pink-tinged roses are named for Mary Queen of Scots' favourite poet, Pierre de Ronsard. The cornucopia of perfect fruit has Yves Deshoulières' gold and green-floral Ritz plates that were originally drawn and designed by César Ritz himself. English-language and local magazines celebrate Paris, the hotel and its owner. Bedlinens are champagne-coloured Quagliotti for Ritz Paris (the pillowcase has my initials) and the minibar's bubbly is Ritz Champagne Brut Rosé. But my bed-and-breakfast here - a few minutes from Rue Faubourg St Honoré and its haut-retail - is also utterly practical. There is an all-plug adaptor in the minibar. I can make coffee (Krups Nespresso). It is also thoughtful. All 500 staff members wear big, easy-read name labels. The gym - like the elegant columned pool open from 6.30am, even weekends - has new, disposable headsets on every Technogym machine • Nothing is too much when it comes to Ritz Dosage (Acar's buzzword). I hear about a recent guest who noticed her ring was missing. CCTV showed she had arrived without it. It was found, after a mammoth search, and unknown to her the GM sent it to Boucheron for polishing, and one of the 15 diamonds - missing for years - was replaced, with compliments, Ritz style.

Even on so short a visit, time in the spa is essential here (where else do you see on a treatment room wall. 'I'm not interested in age. People who tell me their age are silly. You are as old as you feel!'). Try a simultaneous manicure and pedicure by Emilie and Marie-Claude, to whom aficionados understandably fly in from far and wide. The night maid has squeezed my nightie to a four-inch waist. I have a bottle of Vittel in a silver holder, and a card tells me the weather, and morning and afternoon temperatures in C and F • In the morning, I deem the intimate 55-seat L'Espadon surely one of the world's most elegant breakfast places - multi-mirrored and pale salmon walls, a ceiling inset with a pale blue sky trompe l'oeil, Beige linens and napkins, Ritz china and a room-centre floral cascade crowning the circular three-armed banquette. This is à la carte style. Although there is Imperial Caviar on the menu, I merely go for continental, juice from a trolley of silver-topped glass jugs, cold cereal, a baked goods basket and beverage (a superbly groomed waiter, hearing I am not American, suggests a double espresso with a side order of hot water). I do an impromptu butter tasting, of the divine unsalted and salted concoctions hand-made by the butter-maker to the stars, Jean-Yves Bordier. Next time, I will dine here: Michel Roth has two Michelin stars for L'Espadon, and even more exclusive is the Chef's Table. This visit, sadly, I can only pass by, rather than patronize, the stunning Valentino boutiques as I head for a meeting. Eddie is ready to drive me away in the S class Mercedes.

## **REST OF THE NEWS - LIVE**

Four Seasons Resort Provence at Terre Blanche adds, from January, make-your-own perfume, working with the Grasse-based Fragonard company: also new here are specialized weekends, offering slimming, de-stressing and detoxing (is it true that GM René Beauchamp is going to build a 60-slot golf driving range, to complement the two Dave Thomas courses?). Company-wide, Four Seasons will this year open, in order, in Hangzhou, Vail, Denver and Marrakech • The Santiago de Chile-based explora brand, started by businessman-wineproducer Pedro Ibañez, is expanding into - wine programmes. One- and two-day sessions at Viña Porta in Chile's Alto Cachapoal Valley include meeting such winemakers as American Jessica Tomei. You stay overnight at the six-bedroom, 1875-vintage Casa Porta Hotel.

Cruise West's Voyages of the Great Explorers is a 335-day Spirit of Oceanus circumnavigation - Singapore-Singapore, March 6, 2010 to February 3rd, 2011 - 120 passengers will be visiting no fewer than 242 different ports in 59 countries • Viceroy Anguilla finally opens December 15th, with Jan Tibaldi (ex Sandy Lane and One&Only) at the helm: the 166 rooms all have plunge pools and Kelly Wearstler interiors (other special features include a free kids' club, 3,200 ft of beachfront and 35 secluded acres overall) • June 2010 sees the opening of the 82-room Yeatman, Oporto (GM is Francisco Franco-Afonso): owned by Port's mammoth Fladgate Partnership, expect stunning views over Oporto, a noteworthy cellar, and a spa line featuring Douro Valley wines • The Peninsula Chicago is back to basics, offering two-hour courses in how to throw a party, be it a wedding, birthday or what • If you cannot make the Louisville KY Derby, April 31st, 2010, try a Fall Bourbon pilgrimage at 21c Museum Hotel, Louisville • The Connaught, London, has built The Apartment, on top of what is now a six-floor hotel. Take it as-is, complete with master bedroom, ten-seat dining room, and two wrap-around outside terraces with topiary by Chelsea gold medallist Tom Stuart Smith - or add on up to five adjacent bedrooms. David Collins' design magic, all 2,260 sq ft of it, heathery blues and ocean greys, pale lavender leather-lined storage areas, double-height vaulted ceilings. You have Krug, Bamford toiletries, and guaranteed hotel restaurant tables, including at Hélène Darroze - she can also send up private dining.

James McBride, CEO of YTL Hotels, has hired Hollywood's best showbiz hotel-PR, Sarah Cairns - she'll be working the Grammys and Oscars ahead of the May 2010 of the 15-room The Muse, Ramatuelle, and it will be choca-celebs all summer long • Air France's best PR is Melissa Biggs Bradley, Indagare Travel, who told the Ultra Forum of its First Class lounge, Paris-Roissy CDG, with Ducasse food, limo to your plane (better than flying private) • Small Luxury Hotels, which has a total of 2,000 social followers, is getting 100 membership enquiries a month, but only 5% of these are admitted • Badrutt's Palace, St Moritz is getting ready for the Cresta Run's 125th Anniversary in February 2010 • Updates at North Island, Seychelles include WiFi in all villas, enhancement of Villa 11 to a stunning 7,500 sq ft honeymoon suite, and new Barbadian chef Michael Harrison's pedigree includes cooking for President George H Bush and Diana, Princess of Wales • Qualia Resort, Whitsundays, now adds the 18 holes of Peter Thomson golf, only five minutes' boat away.

**And:** The ILTM Champagne Bar (Laurent-Perrier, sponsored by Kiwi Collection) is open from noon today, Thursday. By the way, V112, the Kiwi Collection-Visa stand warrants a sustainability award: it is recycled, it packs flat, ready for the must-visit, ALTM, Shanghai, June 14-17, 2010, www.altm.net. The main Gostelow Live Report award undoubtedly goes to ILTM director Debbie Joslin and her fabulous team on the entire ILTM 2009. Next ILTM, December 7-9, 2010, with the Forum Monday December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010, www.iltm.net

