

luxury briefing.

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Growth spurt:

sales leap at Hermès, LVMH, PPR, Tod's

Patriot purchasing and how the 'made in...' label is a factor in more and more buying decisions

Design with Danish DNA: the Georg Jensen back story

Plus: Kara Ross, Nicholas Kirkwood, Anya Hindmarch, Morgans, Firmdale

luxury. services

“Luxury brands need to put employees first, not customers. This counter-intuitive move ensures happy, empowered employees – the kind of employees who provide top-notch service. Employees who are happy in their jobs create better experiences for the guests”

John T A Vanderslice, Hilton Worldwide global head of luxury and lifestyle brands, in ‘The Luxury Manifesto’, a web-based video series featuring conversations with luxury influencers in fashion, media, hospitality and the arts

BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL

Los Angeles’s famous ‘Pink Palace’ is rapidly approaching its 2012 centenary, in preparation for which the iconic Beverly Hills Hotel has undergone a complete refurbishment of its 204 rooms, 21 suites, the Polo Lounge restaurant – a favourite with the Hollywood community – and the extensive La Prairie spa. The latest additions are the two new ‘Presidential Bungalows’. Set in a suitably secluded spot in the grounds, these are complete houses, replicating the kind of high-end property actually found in Beverly Hills. Each comprises 5,500 sq ft and includes three bedrooms, a ‘Great Room’, dining room and professional kitchen as well as private pools, gardens, courtyards, exercise areas and, apparently, the only private outdoor showers in LA. The Beverly Hills Hotel, along with The Dorchester, Le Meurice, the Plaza Athénée, New York Palace, Bel-Air and Coworth Park and 45 Park Lane in the UK, is part of The Dorchester Collection.

ANANTARA

Anantara is launching its first property in Vietnam this autumn. The luxury beach destination, Anantara Mui Ne Resort & Spa, is located on the south-east coast, next to the town of Phan Thiet in the province of Binh Thuan. Its 89 rooms, suites and pool villas are surrounded by tropical gardens and a fresh water lagoon, with its largest room – the Presidential Suite – stretching to 178 sq m and the pool villas featuring open-air bathrooms and private pools. The first Anantara Resort opened in 2001 in Thailand, expanding into the Maldives in 2006 – the company now has 10 properties overall.

QUINCE AT THE MAY FAIR

This month will see new restaurant Quince open its doors at the May Fair Hotel. Featuring the modern Eastern Mediterranean cuisine of chef patron Bulgarian-born Silvena Rowe, the menu is inspired by dishes

taken from the archives of the Ottoman Empire as well as by more modern influences. For example, the Orange Blossom Baklava dates back to 1494 and was said to be a favourite of Roxelane, a harem girl who became the wife of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent. All dishes are served family style and created for sharing. The interior of the 90-seat dining room was designed by Martin Brudnizki with the addition of a chef’s table for eight and the Quince Salon, which is open for afternoon tea.

LA MADDALENA HOTEL & YACHT CLUB

La Maddalena Hotel & Yacht Club has opened on the archipelago of La Maddalena, which lies between Sardinia and Corsica. Designed by Studio Boeri Architetti and furnished by Antonio Marras, the 116-room hotel features a spa and over-water conference centre, as well as its own port. Standing on the site of a former military base, Porto Arsenal has berths for 600 boats, including yachts over 100m. The archipelago itself is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which is made up of more than 60 islands, and the adjoining island of Caprera is where Garibaldi spent the final 27 years of his life, with his house there now preserved as a museum. La Maddalena Hotel & Yacht Club is part of Eleganza Hotels & Spas, which also owns Forte Village in Sardinia and Castel Monastero in Tuscany.

VILLANDRY

Hush owner Jamie Barber has sold his London food store, bar and restaurant, Villandry, to the former managing director of Le Pain Quotidien Philippe Le Roux, who has plans to expand the concept. The Great Portland Street flagship and the outlet at the Bicester Village shopping centre in Oxfordshire were acquired for an undisclosed sum with the deal coming one month after Barber’s sale of his Kitchen Italia group of restaurants. “Philippe is one of the most

skilled operators of his class and I am delighted to pass the keys of Villandry on to him knowing that he has plans to grow the business and take it to the next level,” says Barber. Villandry first opened in 1991 on Marylebone High Street and relocated to its current premises on Great Portland Street in 1997. It was taken over by Barber in 2005 who opened its second site in 2008, followed by the opening of the more casual Villandry Kitchen in High Holborn in 2009.

JOEL ROBUCHON

Michelin-starred chef Joel Robuchon has opened two new restaurants in Singapore. The 52-seat L’Atelier de Joel Robuchon draws inspiration from the preparation of Japanese cuisine and the atmosphere of Spanish tapas bars, while the more formal fine-dining Joel Robuchon Restaurant has 54 seats and serves classic French cuisine. Both are located at the seaside Resorts World Sentosa complex. The French chef has received more Michelin stars than any other chef in the world, clocking up a total of 26 in cities including Las Vegas, New York, Hong Kong and Taipei.

FIRMDALE HOTELS

One of Firmdale Hotels’ original properties, the Dorset Square Hotel, has been bought back by the company after it fell into administration earlier this year. Firmdale – co-founded by Tim and Kit Kemp – had originally launched the 37-room hotel in 1985, introducing a new breed of luxury

Don’t look down

Sustainability means more than just dropping towels in the bath. **Auberge Resorts** designs its new properties with careful attention to alternative energy systems, water conservation, reclaimed materials, native plants and – interestingly – ‘dark sky’ principles... all the better to see the stars by.

Decorating tip

One sign of a great hotel: keeping it looking brand new, even after being open daily for 18 years. Gregory Day, GM of **Shutters on the Beach**, has an inspiring approach: (1) a continuous programme of refurbishment whereby single rooms in turn are closed, stripped (including paint) and completely redecorated, so the property never has to close; (2) a night team of painters who start at 11pm and work silently until 7am inside and out touching up every mark from the day before. A sign of a great GM too.

boutique hotels into the London market, but sold it eight years ago. The hotel is currently closed for major refurbishment and is due to reopen at the end of 2011. "Kit is currently working on the interior design and it will look very different from the country house style during their previous ownership," says director of marketing and PR Craig Markham. "The new design will show how her style has evolved in recent years and will be more in line with some of our other hotels, such as the Haymarket. Tim and Kit also have a lot of fondness for the building, given that it was their first hotel." Firdale now has seven hotels in London and one in New York. It has also received planning permission to develop a flagship property at Ham Yard in London's Soho (see *LB* Sept 2010): a 90-bedroom hotel with 24 apartments and 12 retail stores, which is due to open in 2013. It will also include a 120-seat cinema and bowling alley.

THE GRAND HOTEL

Stockholm's Grand Hôtel has unveiled 31 newly refurbished rooms and suites with a host of environmentally friendly features. These include a new control system for heating, cooling and lighting which conserves energy more efficiently, energy-efficient windows, pre-programmed floor heating and intelligent lighting in the rooms and corridors which reflect the time of day and can detect if the guests are in or out of their rooms. The interiors feature soft rugs over oak floors with fabrics in grey, champagne, mother of pearl, dusty pink, gold and cream inspired by the style of previous celebrity guests such as Grace Kelly. "The Grand Hôtel has always been at the forefront of the hotel industry in the Nordic region and we continue to lead the development. The renovation of our flagship rooms is a natural and important step in our endeavour to be among the best hotels in Europe," explains Marie Louise Kjellström, managing director.

Flying saucers

Michelin-starred chef Heston Blumenthal is on the hunt for an up-and-coming chef to design a **British Airways** menu for passengers flying to the UK in the run up to and during the Olympic Games. The successful candidate will create a British menu inspired by London 2012 with Blumenthal providing one-to-one mentorship. "I thrive on creativity and developing new and exciting dishes, and I'm looking to find someone who shares this enthusiasm," says Blumenthal. "Together we will showcase British cuisine at its best and at 35,000 feet." Anyone over the age of 16 can enter, deadline the end of July.

Meanwhile chefs including Jason Atherton, Pierre Koffmann, Hélène Darroze and Marcus Wareing will be treating diners to meals on board the London Eye at the end of October during the **London Restaurant Festival**. Other events taking place during the city-wide week of celebrations include walking gourmet tours in Soho, Mayfair, Covent Garden and Clerkenwell as well as bus tours and food quizzes.

BLAKES

London hotel Blakes has revealed a fresh new look, with 47 refurbished rooms, a new gym and Japanese-inspired garden courtyard, following eight months' work on the property. The boutique hotel, located in a courtyard in South Kensington, originally opened in 1978, designed by Anouska Hempel who has also overseen the recent redesign. Her vibrant colour schemes are complemented by accessories, furniture and artefacts personally collected on her travels, with signature suites including The Corfu Suite – an all-white suite featuring gossamer nets and mother of pearl – and Suite 007 with original Art Deco bureau doors. Blakes Bar and Restaurant have been given a makeover, and the Chinese Room is available for private hire. The hotel was acquired by Meir Abutbul, hotelier and owner of pâtisserie chain Apostrophe, for about £20 million with hotelier Navid Mirtorabi in October. It had been trading while in administration following the collapse of owner GuestInvest in October 2008 (see *LB* November 2011).

MAHIKI

Mahiki, the Mayfair cocktail bar famous for its A-list clientele, is due to launch a restaurant and karaoke room this summer. In keeping with the club's Polynesian theme, the restaurant will feature colourful Hawaiian cushions and hand-carved wooden figures, and serve American diner classics with a twist. In the club area, the interior of the new Mahiki Southern Comfort No-Tell Motel Room is based on the décor of a 1970s motel with kitsch, eclectic décor and a karaoke machine for late-night reveling.

ONE FOR ONE

A new ultra-elite private members club has opened on Park Lane. The bar, which is owned by Liron Ozeri (of Level Fashion, which distributes brands such as D&G and Roberto Cavalli to Israel) and Vladamir Gelev

(of Atlantic Bar and Grill, Embassy and more recently Whisky Mist) features tables fitted with integrated ice buckets complete with drains, so that when the ice melts, the bottle doesn't drip. And 'handbag drawers' come complete with individual keys, so guests can lock valuables away whilst on the dance floor. Guests are also able to purchase jewellery exclusively designed for the club by Shamballa. "It's all about the customer experience... if you are going to spend a significant amount of money you want that experience to be flawless from beginning to end," says Gelev. "We didn't want the property to be too big as the larger the scale the easier it is for standards of service to slip, therefore we have kept it boutique putting little details in place that our clients will love," adds Ozeri.

AUBERGE RESORTS

Auberge de Soleil in California's Napa Valley, opened 30 years ago in 1981. Since then it has been joined by a highly desirable portfolio of siblings in Napa (Calistoga Ranch, Solage Calistoga), Santa Fe (Encantado, Rancho Valencia), South Carolina (Palmetto Bluff) and Mexico (Esperanza) with yet more in development. Led by founder Mark Harmon, the multi-award-winning company is now taking to the mountains in Telluride and Aspen, both in Colorado. First up are the Auberge Residences at Element 52 in Telluride. These are a collection of 33 whole-ownership, ski in/ski out, two to five-bedroom residences sharing a concierge, private ski lift, fitness centre, spa and heated outdoor pools. Hot on its heels is a joint venture with Aspen Club & Spa to design and develop the Aspen Club and Auberge Residences, another collection of family homes in a spectacular setting. The Club began life in 1976 as a tennis and racquet club and has subsequently developed into a serious 'performance destination', renowned for its fitness and training facilities. Set on the banks of the enticingly-named Roaring Fork River, the Club is also undergoing a complete renovation.

TOMMY HILFIGER

Fashion designer Tommy Hilfiger has signed a contract along with a business partner to pay \$170 million for the New York Metropolitan Life Clock Tower office building overlooking Madison Square Park, with plans to convert it into a luxury hotel. According to reports, Hilfiger has been looking to launch a hotel for a while and put in a bid of \$110 million for eight floors at the former New York Times building on West 43rd Street earlier this year, but later pulled out. The designer also looked at the Hotel Chelsea last year, but didn't put up a formal bid. Hilfiger, famous for his all-American preppy style, sold his clothing brand a year ago to Phillips-Van Heusen for \$3 billion, but remains the principal designer.