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Photos by Simon Brown, Reto Guntli, and courtesy of Preferred Travel Group

FAMILY TIES

Lindsey Ueberroth leads Preferred Travel Group into a new era

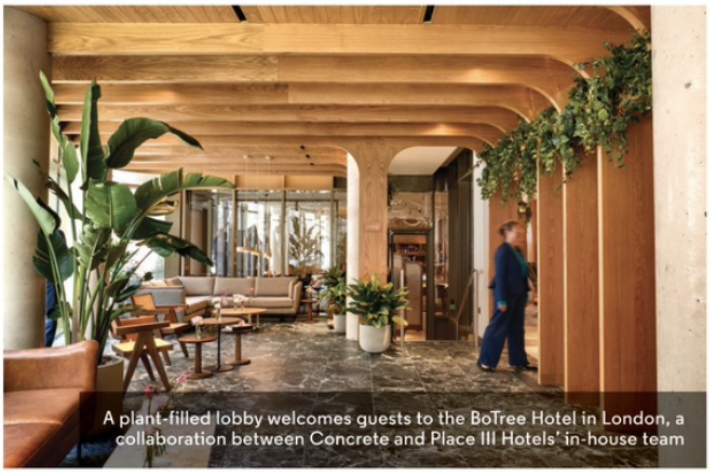
In 2004, travel industry veterans John and Gail Ueberroth bought the Preferred portfolio of global, independent properties founded by hoteliers in 1968. Their daughter, Lindsey, also joined the company, newly renamed as Preferred Hotel Group, working in sales, marketing, and technology before rising to president in 2010 and CEO in 2014.

Rebranded as Preferred Travel Group in 2022, today—with John as executive chairman and Gail as vice chairman and creative officer—it spans more than 1,000 hotels across four brands. The company offers strategic support to those, including the flagship Preferred Hotels & Resorts as well as Historic Hotels of America, Historic Hotels Worldwide, and Beyond Green. In addition, Preferred Travel Group is the parent company of two consulting brands, PTG Consulting and Beyond Green Travel. Here, Lindsey Ueberroth delves into the evolution of the booming family business.

What are the benefits for a Preferred hotel?

We provide everything a chain does—a global reservations platform, sales and marketing, our quality assurance program, a purchasing program, etc.—but without owning or operating the property. Eighty percent of our hotels are truly standalone properties; the other 20 percent are small, independent groups. They're able to plug into a global platform that gives them access and exposure and elevates who they are. It also gives them that seal of approval that they're part of an organization that has made sure they meet quality luxury standards at a flexible price point.

Architect Philip Wohlfahrt and Monoplan crafted a secluded mountain resort for the Interalpen-Hotel Tyrol in Telfs, Austria



A plant-filled lobby welcomes guests to the BoTree Hotel in London, a collaboration between Concrete and Place III Hotels' in-house team

P49 Deesign crafted the earthy Six Senses Spa at the Alpina Gstaad in Switzerland

How did your upbringing expose you to the hospitality world?

Both my mom and dad have always been involved in travel. My mom was a flight attendant for TWA, and my dad has worked in every facet, from running Hawaiian Airlines to what's now CWT [formerly Carlson Wagonlit Travel, a travel management company], where he was in charge of the corporate travel division. We traveled all the time and visited hotels instead of churches. When I was in fifth grade, my parents took us out of school for six months and we traveled the world starting in Siberia. We went through Checkpoint Charlie when it still existed, crossing over the Berlin Wall. That was a life-altering trip.

Did you think you would follow in your parents' footsteps?

I thought I'd be a vet—although I'm bad at science and allergic to a lot of animals—but that was my life's aspiration. I went on to work for what's now Accenture Consulting. It is interesting how your life ultimately turns a passion into your career.

After 9/11, when there was a downturn in travel, the original incarnation of Preferred suffered financially. What prompted your parents to buy it?

Twenty years ago, Preferred was owned by the hoteliers. They were the shareholders. When 9/11 happened, people stopped traveling. The hoteliers wanted to protect their hotels. They weren't concerned about the company. Around

DimoreStudio Milan led the design of Le Logis in Cognac, France, complete with an outdoor pool, private cinema, and pétanque field

51 Bar at the Grand Velas Boutique Los Cabos hotel in Mexico, designed by Ricardo Elias

The Grand Hotel Son Net in Spain's Balearic Islands is set in a 17th-century estate restored by Lorenzo Castillo

that time, they started looking for somebody to invest or buy it, and they approached my dad. We decided as a family to buy the company.

Preferred had 85 hotels when you started. What are some of the milestones from your last two decades?

One of them was launching Preferred Boutique. It was a new brand, and we had to do everything from the sales and marketing to integrating it into the organization. We ended up absorbing that into our rebranding. At that point, we had a number of other brands including Sterling Hotels and Summit Hotels and Resorts. We were considering launching another brand, but we took a step back and said, 'Everyone is doing that. It's confusing. It's cluttered. Let's do the reverse.' We retired [Sterling and Summit] and collapsed our member hotels under one master brand, Preferred Hotels & Resorts.

You acquired Beyond Green, founded by Costas Christ in 2020. How is that collection moving the needle on sustainability?

It's focus is not only on the reuse, recycle, reduce component, but also hiring and sourcing locally, as well as celebrating the cultural heritage of the destination. Their philosophy is you can't do it in a vacuum. Beyond Green members are subject to a rigorous vetting process, based on globally recognized sustainable tourism standards and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. All members must undergo an onsite inspection based on more than 50 sustainability indicators across three pillars to join the portfolio, which are then re-inspected every two years

Are branded residences a growing segment for Preferred?

I'd say at least a third of our new hotels that come on board open with some residential component, whether it's a handful of standalone residences or suites that can operate as a residence. You have more hotels trying to put more of that inventory into their mix because you have [big groups] that travel together, and they want a residence but with all the [amenities] of a hotel.

What is your secret to success?

We're a privately held and family-owned business. We can make decisions on what we believe is right, not what a shareholder is

Crystal chandeliers set an elegant tone in Helsinki's Hotel Maria, designed by developer Samla Capital, Puroplan, and the hotel's head designer Jana Sasko

A fountain is the centerpiece of the atrium relaxation room at the Hotel Maria's spa

Pendry Newport Beach in California, the handiwork of Studio Munge and Burton Landscape Architecture Studio

The Studio Arthur Casas-designed Pulso Hotel in São Paulo brings together wood, glass, and contemporary artwork

dictating. We can be nimble. We like to hire people that are entrepreneurial, which helps foster a lot of creativity. The chains have entered into the independent space, too. It keeps us on our toes. We don't get 30-year management agreements. Ours average five years, but we have hotels that have been with us for 50 years. That requires us to be customer focused and innovative to stay ahead of what our competitors are doing.

What's it like running Preferred with your parents?

When my family bought it, we said as long as we're having fun, we're going to continue to do this. My dad is a visionary and he's great at turning around businesses. My mom is a creative genius, and she loves that piece of it. I'm good at the relationship side of things and building culture and teams. When you put all three of those together, it makes a nice, balanced perspective.

What keeps you passionate about the industry?

The most rewarding part of my job is the people. This is the most mentally and emotionally stimulating job you could have because you get to work with people all over the world who are passionate, curious, and global in nature. Also, our team is incredibly interesting and talented. I love that piece of it. hd