



Women of Preferred Unpack Gender Equality & Share Personal Travel Hacks

Tomorrow is [International Women's Day](#), and this year's theme is [#BreaktheBias](#). For some insight, we decided to have a chat with leadership from [Preferred Hotels & Resorts](#), a company that stands out within the industry as 47% of its senior executive team leaders globally are women, including several positions that are traditionally filled by men, specifically CEO, President, and Chief Revenue Officer, with 50% of its wider leadership team also being women. For context, the hotel industry average is 26% of women are in leadership. Though regular readers will know, the [latest research from the Castell Project](#) indicates progress is being made.

"While excellence should not be distinguished by gender and while we are proud that the gender equilibrium within our leadership team serves as a best practice for others, we recognize that the hospitality industry at large has great progress to make before gender bias stops making regular headlines," said [CEO Lindsey Ueberroth](#). "To create impactful momentum on a global scale, it is critical for fellow female executives to share success stories for how they have navigated bias within the industry as a way to champion other women in pursuing their career ambitions without potential prejudice as a hindrance."

And because we are [hertelier](#)—where EVERY day is International Women's Day—we also asked the Preferred team about some practical travel hacks, and habits offering a peek into their lives on the road. Hey, we're nosy, aren't you?



To level the playing field for women in hospitality, how can we move beyond recognizing bias to actively tackling it?

Roberta: It starts with ourselves. It takes a concerted effort to think differently and challenge the stereotypes that have been set in male-dominated environments. It's about providing space, opportunities, and security for women, enabling them to express themselves freely without the fear of prejudice and judgment.

Seema: We need to make the topic of bias part of daily conversation versus only bringing it up while discussing Diversity & Inclusion. It needs to be at the core of company culture for it to be embraced fully.

What advice would you share with women that might be experiencing unconscious bias in the workplace?

Michelle: Don't be afraid to confront the issue head-on. You owe it to yourself to bring it to the attention of the individual that is displaying the bias. The person in question may not even be aware of it or understand why a certain comment or action is demonstrating a bias. The most important part of this is explaining the "why."

Boyana: I grew up with a strong female role model - my single mother working as a doctor in Bulgaria, which was a communist country at the time. She instilled in me the confidence as a woman to tackle any challenges that I've faced during my career. My advice is to be confident and demonstrate to your colleagues your invaluable skills. They will recognize and respect you for it.

In your opinion, how does gender equality positively impact economic and sustainable development globally?

Michelle: By having a well-balanced senior team of both women and men, we encourage diverse perspectives in important areas of collaboration, communication, and management style, helping us to overcome barriers and make well-rounded decisions. It has been proven that all environments with greater gender quality have more cohesion and connection, leading to a valuable mix of perspectives, which greatly benefits society as a whole.

How can we address the gender pay gap and what advice would you give to women in our industry seeking to level up in this regard?

Michelle: Be proactive – no one is going to do this for you. Do your homework and understand the competitive landscape. If you are a manager and have influence over the pay scale of others, be sure you are being fair and equitable.

Boyana: Skills, performance, and contribution should be awarded at market value. My advice for anyone unhappy with their pay is to know your worth and be prepared to ask for it.

Roberta: Challenge the system and communicate with your peers. Leverage your connections and seek support and guidance to further your well-deserved success.

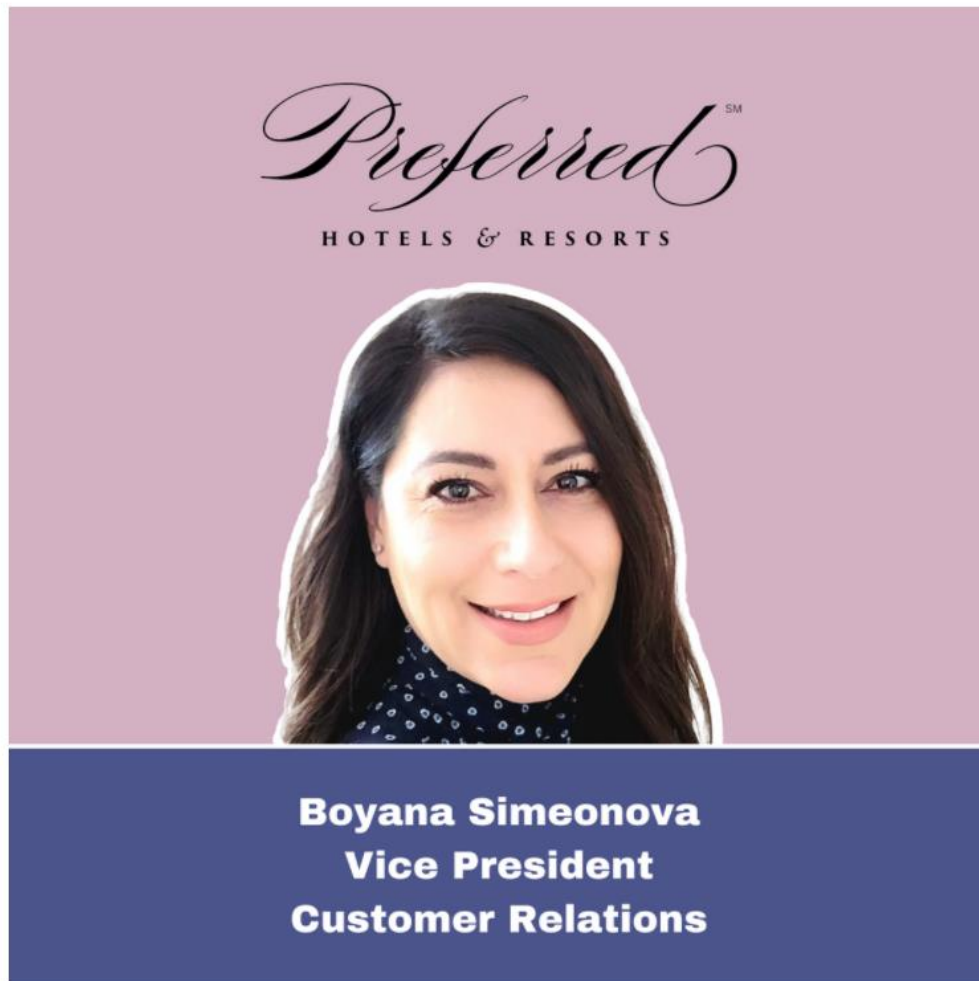
What advice would you share with women beginning their careers in the hospitality industry?

Michelle: My advice is the same for everyone, not just for women. Make every day count - reflect on your successes and failures often, ask for feedback, and contribute new ideas to every meeting. Always remember when you are entering the hospitality industry, whether you are going down the path of operations, finance, marketing, or management, that hospitality is the act of hosting guests in an open, friendly, and warm manner. If you are not willing to be the ultimate host in all that you do, think again.

Roberta: Take a seat at the table. Listen. Express your views. You're not there by chance, you've earned it. Build connections with peers that can support and mentor you in your career path.

Seema: What has helped me navigate through my journey all these years is clarity of thought, and the adaptability and willingness to learn and grow at every stage. Be authentic, positive, and resilient. Stay true to your individuality and to your role. Proactively find a mentor, they can help you adapt to the new culture quickly and be an enabler for your professional and personal development.

Travel Hacks



Any packing tips?

When I travel with my family, we like to mix up our clothes in everyone's luggage, just in case a bag gets lost in transit.

What are your favorite clothes for air travel?

Leggings, slip-on sneakers, and layers on top - especially helpful when traveling to opposite climate zones. And I never forget my big sunglasses!

Post-COVID travel tips? We're all a little out of practice!

COVID has made us all very impatient, and my advice is to be kind to the airport staff (many work long hours). It is amazing to see how one nice word can make someone feel better, and ensure your trip goes smoothly!

<https://www.hertelier.com/post/women-of-preferred-unpack-gender-equality-share-personal-travel-hacks>

How do you pass the time en route, podcast, iPad or Kindle?

I tend to sleep when I'm traveling. I have the fortunate ability to be able to tune out and fall asleep immediately on planes, trains, and in the passenger seat of the car. On a recent flight from Chicago to Munich, I closed my eyes on take-off and the next thing I remember is the flight attendant's announcement – Good morning ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to Germany!

Do you eat differently on the road?

While traveling I live by one of my favorite quotes – “Calories don't count outside of your postal/ zip code!”

How do you like to get to know a new city or destination?

I love to prepare for my trips and research in advance, and then when I arrive, I always like to experience a tour on the first day. It is a great way to learn from a local guide, and also you then know which spots you want to return to and spend more time exploring.



Top packing tips?

I have always been a “roller”. I roll everything up including my blouses, slacks, blazers, T-shirts, and place them in my suitcase for space optimization and minimized wrinkles – it really works.

What are your favorite clothes for air travel?

Trousers with a stretchy waistband, especially for a long flight, and layers on top such as a camisole, shirt, and sweater. I always take a scarf with me too. Even in the hotter months planes can get cold and a nice scarf can jazz up any outfit!

Post-COVID travel tips? We’re all a little out of practice!

I’ve tried to declutter my home over the last couple of years by cleaning out my closets and cabinets. When I started traveling again, I applied the same principles and simplified my approach to packing. I cleaned out all of the little bags and bottles of cosmetics and toiletries and now try to stick to limited larger items. This lightens the luggage load and is also a more sustainable approach.

How do you pass the time en route, podcast, iPad, or Kindle?

iPad all the way! I download a few (or all episodes) of something I want to watch that my husband doesn’t have on his list. I also catch up on my reading and download a selection of books and articles. And, if I need to, I can always log on and get through some emails.

Do you eat differently on the road?

I try to stick to my usual eating habits, but adjust for all-day events and dinners by eating a little less at each meal. My daily treat is a diet coke!

What do you do in your free time on business trips (if you have free time)?

I’m very lucky that all of the hotels in our portfolio offer truly unique local and cultural experiences, that I love to be immersed in on business trips. When I have some extra time, I like to walk around the city and neighborhood that I’m staying in and explore the local restaurants and shops.

How do you keep up your self-care/ wellness on the road?

I recently started doing yoga via an app on my iPad, I try to practice for at least ten minutes every morning.

If you’re a reader, what was the last book you read?

“Where the Crawdads Sing” by Delia Owens. It’s a beautifully written story about the survival of a young girl who has grown up in the remote marshlands of North Carolina.

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Roberta Possenti
Vice President Europe

Insider tips for handling jet lag?

I always try to go to bed at a similar time that I would at home, regardless of different time zones. If I struggle to dose off I put my feet up at a 90° angle, which helps me to relax and sends calming signals to both my body and mind – give it a go!

Post-COVID travel tips? We're all a little out of practice!

I've definitely got out of practice when it comes to packing for trips! I always try to keep it simple and pack a selection of formal, smart casual, and casual outfits, to ensure I'm ready for all occasions.

Do you eat differently on the road?

I try to eat light meals when traveling, preferring vegetables and limiting protein. I also make sure I drink a lot of water to help with the jetlag and travel dehydration.

How do you like to get to know a new city or destination?

I love to walk everywhere and ask locals for their recommendations on their favorite spots. If I have time, I also like to experience an organized tour to learn more about the destination in a short space of time.

What do you do in your free time on business trips (if you have free time)?

When I have free time I like to mingle with locals and walk around, visit museums and exhibitions, and visit local markets. I also love to shop and bring back souvenirs and gifts for my family at home.



What is your top travel hack?

For long-haul flights, I like to travel with a smaller pouch or a sling bag, filled with essentials including my mobile phone, hand sanitizer, lip balm, hand cream, USB cable, sleep eye mask, pen, passport, and boarding card. This means I don't have to try and open the cabin to access my handbag each time I need something – given my height that's never easy!

Insider tips for handling jet lag?

Personally, for me, it's more psychological. I change the time on my watch mid-way and not after arriving at the destination, which helps me adapt to the new time zone quicker. Stay hydrated during travel. Try not to disrupt the sleep-wake pattern, meaning adjust the eating and sleeping time as per the new time zone almost immediately upon arrival. I also keep reminding myself not to confuse travel fatigue and exhaustion with jet lag.

Post-COVID travel tips?

COVID has definitely changed things, and with many protocols and restrictions still in place, international travel can be stressful even for frequent travelers. Traveling now is more about embracing the new normal. Plan better. Educate yourself on travel guidelines to and from your destination and have your paperwork in place (vaccine certificate, test reports, arrival forms, etc.). Take care of safety and hygiene. Stay mentally prepared for procedural delays – expect that and you wouldn't find it cumbersome. Go with the flow and continue to believe in travel!

How do you like to get to know a new city or destination?

Mostly from chatting with locals. I enjoy speaking to the hotel team, restaurant staff, cab drivers, and any other locals I might meet. I ask them questions about themselves, their culture, traditions, and their top tips on how to enjoy the destination – it's fun, it helps me learn about the place, and also make great connections.