

## Industry Q&A: Robert Van Ness of Preferred Hotels & Resorts



With more than 750 hotels, resorts and residences spanning 85 countries, Preferred Hotels & Resorts is the world's largest independent hotel brand. The business has been built through partnerships with both single properties and boutique hotel collections that are at once celebrated by their differences and unified by a high standard of excellence.

Robert Van Ness, executive vice president of the Americas for Preferred Hotels & Resorts, talked about the brand's growing presence in Mexico, as well as how travel advisors can best work with the company.

**You've had properties in Mexico for 20 years, and recently celebrated your 70th member hotel there. How has your presence in Mexico evolved?**

It's incredibly exciting to achieve this major milestone in Mexico. Mexico's luxury market has emerged as the largest and most resilient in Latin America. And although traditional destinations such as Cancun and Riviera Maya continue to be popular,

travelers' interests have extended to other destinations, such as Los Cabos, Ixtapa, Mayakoba and San Miguel de Allende. American luxury travelers still comprise the majority of visitors to Mexico, but over the last 20 years, the luxury market has continued to grow among travelers from China, Australia, Germany and Japan.



**How has the termination of the Mexico Tourism Board affected business?**

The major structural changes have proven to be quite controversial, particularly within the hospitality industry. This year has seen a much larger volume of press coverage surrounding tourism and hospitality in Mexico than in previous years, as the industry reacts to the lack of promotional funding. But this lack of federal funding has provided Preferred Hotels & Resorts with a platform to emphasize the brand's key attributes, including the strategic global distribution and the sales and marketing services we provide to Mexican hoteliers.

Also, Preferred Hotels & Resorts' sister division, PHG Consulting, provides strategic sales and marketing solutions for the tourism industry, and we have seen an influx of requests for support from a variety of destinations in Mexico seeking to maintain momentum in the U.S. market in particular. Most recently, PHG Consulting signed an agreement to represent the State of Jalisco, and we have represented Guadalajara since 2015. We're excited that our destination partnerships and hotel affiliations allow us to support Mexico's tourism industry from a variety of angles.

**How do each of Preferred's five distinct collections curate special guest experiences?**

We offer five different collections that allow guests to travel for personal, professional, social or family reasons during various points in their lives, and these collections allow guests to choose the type of experience that meets their specific needs for each trip. The Connect Collection connects people to friends, family, business associates and local neighborhoods, while the Lifestyle Collection is the broadest category, combining chic style, friendly service, upscale amenities and dining that reflects the local culture. L.V.X. Collection hotels, meanwhile, feature an elegant luxury experience — exceptional dining, entertainment and spas — with more personalized service, and the Legend Collection consists of iconic properties in the world's most popular destinations. Finally, Preferred Residences is a collection that integrates the space and privacy of a home into the convenience of a hotel stay. These properties include beachfront bungalows, contemporary apartments and countryside cottages.

**What educational opportunities does Preferred Hotels & Resorts offer to agents?**

We host more than 200 annual roadshows, events and fam trips that allow advisors to experience the independent luxury hotels represented by Preferred in both established and new markets. Also, our sales team is regularly visiting agents at their offices to strengthen relationships and share all the latest brand news. We truly value the advisor community, and we are committed to keeping them abreast of new destinations, properties, programs and special offers.

**The Details**

Preferred Hotels & Resorts

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