

LEADERS IN *Hospitality*

The Best of the Best

An Interview with Alberto del Hoyo,
General Manager, The Beverly Hills Hotel and Bungalows

EDITORS' NOTE A graduate of the University of Madrid, Alberto del Hoyo has managed major hotels around the world, including the Regent Beverly Wilshire, before assuming his present post in 1997.

PROPERTY BRIEF Built in 1912 and set amid 12 landscaped acres, The Beverly Hills Hotel and Bungalows (www.beverlyhillshotel.com) features 204 guest rooms, suites, and private bungalows, and the celebrity-favorite, The Polo Lounge. Long known as "The Pink Palace," the hotel is a member of the Dorchester Collection.



Alberto del Hoyo



Has the current economic climate had an impact on business at The Beverly Hills Hotel?

We are aware of the economic downturn in every aspect of business; however, our revenues are up 11 percent year-to-date. The restaurant has been down a little, but not much – about 10 percent. There has been no decrease in room occupancy or rates.

Is the property where you want it to be, and do you foresee any projects on the horizon?

The property is in top shape because we invest money into it every year. I have two sizable projects pending approval – two new bungalows, about 4,000 square feet each. If everything goes well, they will be up and running in about a year and a half.

Is it true that your suites and signature suites are so popular that they always sell first?

Absolutely. The more expensive the accommodations, the easier they are to sell. We are very fortunate to have that type of clientele. They come to us because we provide excellent service and excellent accommodations, which is what we have been doing for many years.

How have you been so successful at retaining your staff in such a high-turnover industry?

We know our main asset is our people. We cultivate that asset because that's what keeps our clients coming back.

Your restaurant, The Polo Lounge, has become part of the community. Is it challenging to be successful as a hotel restaurant, and how have you been able to have that impact on the community?

Ninety percent of our clientele in The Polo Lounge is from the local community. We are famous for having very good food, and we've been consistent for many years. We do not host large celebrations. People come here to conduct business and eat. Most of our people are regular clientele. Many come two or three times a week; some come every day for lunch or dinner.

How much of a focus is the spa experience for the hotel, and as a luxury hotel, do you need to offer the full spa experience?

A luxury hotel without a spa is not an option these days. We have a partnership with La Prairie, which has proved to be a win-win situation, because we do have a very profitable and well run spa.

Has the word luxury lost some of its meaning from overuse, and how do you define luxury?

Luxury has been very much misused lately. Anyone can claim to be a luxury hotel. The only way you can measure that is by the clientele. Some people think luxury is service; some say luxury is location. I agree with that, but what makes a great hotel is a great clientele, and that we have.

Is it challenging in today's fast-paced environment to maintain relationships with guests?

It's a balance. It's not only the clientele you have to dedicate time to; you also have to dedicate time to your employees, the financials, and many other things. This is what makes the job so interesting, because it's so diverse. One day you are choosing carpet and you have to know about carpets, and the next day you are choosing entertainment for a party. It's not boring because of the many different activities you do on a daily basis.

Has being part of the Dorchester Collection – a fine group of highly respected hotels – been important to the success and development of The Beverly Hills Hotel?

It has been crucial to our success. It has allowed us sell ourselves as a luxury brand, and our affiliation with such prestigious, iconic hotels definitely has helped us. We are also managing Hotel Bel-Air, another iconic hotel in Los Angeles, and have great plans to do a lot of things together.

Do you cater to a different clientele than the Bel-Air, and do the hotels complement each other?

The clientele of the Bel-Air and The Beverly Hills Hotel are on the same level. We both have the top average rate in the city. So our strategy, because we are owned and managed by the same company, will be to complement each other and compete with the other hotels in town.

When you joined The Beverly Hills Hotel in 1997, could you have imagined more than 10 years later you would still be here?

Not in my wildest dreams. The time a typical General Manager spends in a hotel is between two and five years. This is such a wonderful company and such an incredible hotel; I couldn't find anything like it elsewhere.

You talk about the business as if it's more exciting today than ever. Are you really having that much fun?

I'm having a lot of fun, and I hope I will continue to have fun for many years, especially now that the company is growing. There is a commitment from our ownership to grow the brand, and I believe we have something unique because all of our hotels are iconic. They are the best of the best, and each is famous worldwide.

How do you maintain a work/life balance within the company?

We're very happy people. We have a lot of activities for employees, and it's a very nice environment. Our ownership encourages us to be that way. ●

A bungalow at The Beverly Hills Hotel