

## True to its Heritage

An Interview with David Burke,  
Vice President, Sales and Marketing, The Breakers

**EDITOR'S NOTE** A 30-year veteran of the hospitality industry, David Burke joined The Breakers in 1991 after 10 years with Hyatt Hotels and Resorts. He has served as Chairman of the Palm Beach County Convention and Visitors Bureau and is an active member of the Palm Beach County Tourist Development Council. Burke is a graduate of Florida International University with a bachelor of science degree in hospitality management.



David Burke

**PROPERTY BRIEF** Set amid 140 acres of ocean-front property on the island of Palm Beach, Florida, The Breakers ([www.thebreakers.com](http://www.thebreakers.com)) is one of America's legendary resort destinations and a AAA Five Diamond Award winner. Originally founded in 1896 by magnate Henry M. Flagler, it was rebuilt in 1926 after two fires destroyed the original building. The multifaceted, Italian Renaissance-style property features 560 deluxe guest rooms including 57 suites; two 18-hole championship golf courses; a 20,000-square-foot luxury spa; a Mediterranean-style beach club with 30 premium beach bungalows and cabanas for day use; two fitness centers; four swimming pools; 10 tennis courts; a family entertainment center; nine outstanding restaurants; and an array of on-site boutiques all owned and managed by The Breakers. It is one of the few privately held resorts to remain successfully independent of chain affiliation.

**The travel and tourism industry has been deeply affected by the global economic crisis. How much of an impact have you seen at The Breakers and what is your outlook for the property or 2010?**

The Breakers' financial platform has been solid and healthy for many years. We have virtually no debt on the property. This empowers us to remain committed to our high quality standards for the physical property and for service. We are expecting to see continued growth of our leisure business and even greater patronage by our loyal, repeat guests, who are the cornerstone of our business. We are developing new markets every day, by industry and geographically, and expect to emerge with greater market share in 2010.

**The Breakers offers a wide range of accommodations. Would you provide an**

**overview of the room and suite offerings at the property?**

The majority of our 540 guest rooms and suites have been redesigned. Staying true to the resort's heritage, we created luxurious retreats – whether guest rooms or suites – where travelers can relax and feel embraced by the surrounding comfort of custom-designed fabrics.

The Flagler Club, the resort's concierge level, offers a gracious residential experience located on the hotel's

top two floors, and features a private lounge and outside terrace. Flagler Club privileges include personal concierge services, elaborate continental breakfast, late-morning refreshments, afternoon tea service, pre-dinner hors d'oeuvres and bar service, and decadent desserts complemented by after-dinner cordials. Club level guests also enjoy complimentary daily spa and fitness membership, a welcome amenity, valet pressing service, and wireless Internet access.

**The Breakers has received much acclaim for its food and beverage product, especially your restaurant L'Escalier. How challenging is it to create successful restaurants in a competitive market like Palm Beach?**

About 10 years ago, we purposely set out to break the mold of hotel dining by creating a distinctive collection of restaurant experiences, each with its own type of cuisine, atmosphere, personality, and level of formality. Since then, we have cultivated an inviting array of nine restaurants to successfully entice hotel guests to stay on property and to lure local residents to The Breakers. Guests never have to leave the resort for a great dining experience whether they desire Italian, contemporary French, steak, seafood, Asian, brunch, or beachfront dining.

Our success in food and beverage operations also fostered the development of two off-site restaurants – the Asian restaurant, Echo, located just a few blocks from the main hotel on the island of Palm Beach; and Top of the Point, a panoramic, penthouse-level restaurant located atop the Phillips Point building's East Tower in downtown West Palm Beach.

**Guests expect luxury hotels today to have a full service, quality spa/fitness offering. How much of a focus has this been for The Breakers, and would you provide an overview of your spa facilities?**

One of the leading spas in North America, The Spa at The Breakers is a 20,000 square foot, indoor/outdoor facility designed with a feel of relaxed elegance. Just last year, it was completely refurbished. Spa amenities include a lap pool, oceanfront whirlpool spa, 17 private treatment rooms, and a 1,400-square-foot ocean view fitness center. Treatments, fitness classes, and one-on-one training are available seven days a week.

**The Breakers has placed a major focus on family trips and has special offerings for kids. Would you highlight the family focus of the property?**

For the past five years, The Breakers has been consistently ranked as one of the top family-friendly resorts in the U.S. Children can enjoy engaging kids-only activities at the Coconut Crew Camp or the Family Entertainment Center. The 6,000-square-foot Family Entertainment Center is a secure, self-contained multiplex open daily and adjacent to the resort's Italian Restaurant – at night, it offers wonderful play-and-dine opportunities for families. The Center features an arcade, toddler and children's playrooms, an arts-and-crafts room, a children's movie theatre, indoor and outdoor activities, a video game room featuring Xbox® 360, Playstation® 3, and Wii™ with child-friendly games, an outdoor sports court, and Coconut Crew Kids Playhouse located outdoors adjacent to the sports court. The Breakers also features five pools, individual swim lessons, bicycle rentals, junior golf, a multitude of weekend family events, environmental and historic tours, and a playground with a crushed rubberized safety surface with jungle gym, cargo net, slide, and more.

**As you look to 2010, what are the key priorities for the property?**

As an independent, privately held hotel under single family ownership (descendants of founder Henry Flagler), we will continue to place emphasis on recruiting, training, customer relationship management, marketing, and ongoing capital investments, regardless of the economic ups and downs. We always focus on taking care of our employees, which is quite meaningful during tough times, because we have the kind of workplace that elevates the quality of the guest experience and guarantees customer satisfaction. That will ensure we remain a leader in the industry. ●

*The Breakers' beautiful setting (top and bottom right); the main lobby (right)*

