

A Platform For Change

An Interview with Bernd Pichler, Area Managing Director, 1 Hotels

EDITORS' NOTE Bernd Pichler has more than two decades of hospitality expertise gained from various hotel brands across the United States and abroad. Having joined SH Hotels & Resorts in 2019 at 1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge and later at 1 Hotel Central Park, Pichler was recently appointed to Area Managing Director of 1 Hotels, New York City, overseeing the operation and development of the portfolio in New York City and its greater area. Prior to his tenure at 1 Hotels, Pichler held a series of prominent positions at top-tier properties, including the Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe and Fairmont Grand Del Mar in San Diego. For over the course of the decade, he held various roles at additional Fairmont Hotels & Resorts in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, San Francisco, Sonoma and Pittsburgh. Pichler previously served on the team that opened The Langham London and held diverse Sales and Marketing positions at The Chelsea Toronto in Canada and The Leading Hotels of the World, where he represented the United Kingdom and the Nordic region. A native of Austria, Pichler is a certified sommelier and fluent in English, German, and Spanish. His academic accolades include a degree in international hospitality and tourism management and continued education at universities in Canada, Spain, and the U.S., most recently finishing the asset management program at Cornell University.



Bernd Pichler

flagship property and Mayfair (London), the brand's first European property – is inspired by a simple idea: those that travel the world should also care about it. It is, after all, 1 world. 1 Hotels upholds this vision by channeling nature through design and culinary partnerships while connecting with the local community and taking sustainable steps to make a big difference. The brand is expanding with properties under development in Austin, Cabo San Lucas, Paris, Copenhagen, Elounda Hills (Crete), Riyadh, Melbourne, Seattle, and San Miguel de Allende.

Will you discuss your career journey in the hospitality industry?

I was born in the Alps of Austria and my childhood dream was always to be a hotel manager and travel the world. Following my studies at Tourismsschulen Bad Gleichenberg, I worked in sales and marketing at The Chelsea, Toronto, Canada's largest hotel. The Chelsea had 1700 rooms and provided me with a great understanding of divisional structures and volume. After that, I had the opportunity to open Langham's flagship hotel in London, and following Langham, I joined The Leading Hotels of the World overseeing sales for the Nordic countries.

I have always had a passion for food and beverage. My next stop was Valencia, Spain where I operated the restaurant SEB in El Carmen, the city's entertainment district, welcoming Formula 1 and the America's Cup during my tenure. I loved my time in Valencia, but wanted to broaden my horizons at an international organization. I joined Fairmont Hotels & Resorts in Abu Dhabi to open their second location in the region. Several Fairmont Hotel locations followed and I was able to sharpen my skills and gain valuable experiences around the world: Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, San Diego, and Sonoma. After 10 great years, it was time for a change and I joined The Ritz-Carlton at Lake Tahoe, a beautiful mountain resort allowing me to reconnect with my passion for nature.

Since 2019, I've been with SH Hotels & Resorts (Baccarat, 1 Hotels, and Treehouse), where I currently oversee all 1 Hotels operations and developments in New York City and the greater New York area.

What excited you about the opportunity to join 1 Hotels?

I get this question a lot and love answering it. I treasure my journey and the opportunities large corporations – Accor, Marriott – have given me over the years, however, 1 Hotels offered an opportunity to apply my entrepreneurial skills and be part of the growth of an extraordinary brand from the beginning. 1 Hotels' ethos – we are a mission driven brand inspired by nature, with sustainability at our core. We see ourselves as a platform for change, doing all the good we can, which aligns with my personal values.

I believe the modern traveler searches for unique experiences in luxury but is much more environmentally aware and genuinely cares about the impact they have on our planet. At 1 Hotels, we don't have all the answers and we never preach, but we are always striving to do better and inspire our guests in subtle ways. As our founder, Barry Sternlicht, adequately says: "We have one planet, we all need to take care of it."

How is 1 Hotels positioned in the market and how do you describe the 1 Hotels difference?



The lobby of 1 Hotel Mayfair in London

COMPANY BRIEF As a mission driven luxury lifestyle hotel brand inspired by nature, 1 Hotels (1hotels.com) cultivates the best of sustainable design and architecture, together with extraordinary comfort and an unrivaled level of service. 1 Hotels – which launched in 2015 with the opening of exclusive properties in Miami's South Beach and Manhattan's Central Park which were followed by Brooklyn, located on the East River, in February 2017; West Hollywood, on Sunset Boulevard, in June 2019; Sanya (China) in 2020; Toronto in 2021; San Francisco and Nashville in 2022; and in 2023, the Hanalei Bay



1 Hotel Hanalei Bay, Kauai

As the first mission-driven lifestyle hotel brand inspired by nature, 1 Hotels uniquely combines biophilic design and sustainable practices with extraordinary levels of comfort and service. We are a leader in the purpose-driven luxury and lifestyle hotel segment. We practice sustainability in all aspects of what we do without sacrificing design, functionality or luxury. All decisions are made through this lens, always in harmony with nature, with the goal of moving our mission, the industry, and the world forward.

We believe our customer is seeking an eco-friendly approach and our success is exemplified by the brand's extraordinary growth. In 2023, we opened our flagship property in Hanalei Bay, Kauai along with our European flagship, 1 Hotel Mayfair. We are currently embarking on a significant worldwide expansion with properties set to open in Melbourne, Elounda Hills (Crete), Cabo, Paris, Austin, Copenhagen, Riyadh, Seattle, and San Miguel de Allende.

Will you provide an overview of 1 Hotels' properties and where you see opportunities for growth for the brand?

1 Hotels launched in 2015 with properties in South Beach and Manhattan (Central Park). The portfolio now includes Brooklyn Bridge, West Hollywood, Sanya (China), Toronto, San Francisco, and Nashville along with the two flagship properties in Hanalei Bay and Mayfair.

We believe we are shaping the future of hospitality by creating transformative spaces that truly resonate with our guests. As I mentioned above, we are expanding globally and we are actively looking at additional opportunities in major markets from Asia Pacific to Europe to here in the United States.

How has 1 Hotels approached its food and beverage offerings and what are the keys to being successful in this part of the business?

Guided by our sustainable approach, our food and beverage venues offer seasonal menus and day and night experiences that nourish our bodies, uplift the community, and honor nature. We always celebrate local ingredients with the guiding philosophy that the closer things are to home, the better they taste, and we strive to work with as many local producers and artisans as possible.

Our restaurants and day/nightlife concepts are built to be destinations for the community, not just an amenity to the hotel. We engage our guests and the community by finding ways to connect them with people at the forefront of our shared mission. For example, we have brand-wide programs such as A Supper That Sustains Us, a zero-waste on-going dinner event series that gives our local vendors and partners a platform to share their insight on sustainable methods and goals.

Additionally, our food and beverage programs at all our properties are dedicated to zero-waste. Our culinary and beverage teams focus on reducing food waste with the goal of minimizing overall carbon and climate impact. We're currently working towards our short-term goal of 70 percent waste diversion from landfills and incinerators, with a focus on our long-term target of 90 percent or greater total waste diversion in accordance with USGBC's (U.S. Green Building Council) TRUE Zero Waste certification.

We believe that our success comes from creating truly unique food and beverage experiences throughout the entire guest journey that provide a thoughtful, immersive, and delicious experience.

Will you highlight 1 Hotels' commitment to its workforce and investment in training?

1 Hotels is committed to our team members' growth and overall well-being. We do this through various programs including:

- Pay It Forward – We provide our team members with a paid day off to do community service. We also host events throughout the year, with team member participation, for causes that benefit the local communities and the local environment.

- In 2023, we created a bespoke sustainability training on our custom learning platform, SH University, to ensure that all team members understand the basics of sustainability, why it matters, and how we bring it to life.

- We provide growth and development opportunities for our team members by creating clear paths for promotion, creating a Management in Training program, launching a mentorship program for high potential team members, and working to provide international visa/transfer opportunities between the various countries we are located in.

How do you define a true luxury hospitality experience today?

Luxury in today's world has evolved and become a much broader concept. What was thought of as an exceptional experience 10 years ago is considered standard these days. Information and inspiration are at travelers' fingertips and the desire for highly curated, individual, and bespoke experiences is in the forefront. Formality is less relevant than an approachable, authentic interaction allowing guests to truly immerse themselves into the culture and surroundings.

Technology plays a pivotal role in enhancing the overall experience by leveraging cutting-edge innovations to streamline interactions, removing barriers (check-in or services), and integrating personalized preferences from room controls to digital movements. Independent convenience wins.

The upper luxury demands are adding another layer by pursuing experiences that are not only personal and authentic, but are once-in-a-lifetime, one-of-a-kind, or very limited access moments. Private members clubs are on the rise as individuals look beyond the social element alone, focusing on total exclusivity and accessibility – that which no one else can have.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in pursuing a career in the hotel industry?

Do it! If you have a dream or a vision of what your journey can look like, pursue it. You are in the driver's seat of your own life. You can't do it all alone, but you must take the first step. There will always be someone who opens a door, makes an introduction, believes in you, and gives you an opportunity; it's part of the journey. Surround yourself with people from whom you can learn, the good and the bad – it will tailor who you'll become as you progress in your career. Be humble, but ambitious. And whenever you can, don't be afraid of making decisions or jumping into the unknown; it will make you stronger.

A hotel is filled with constant movement and energy. It's a place of fun, beauty, growth, and exceptional moments, the ones we give; and the ones we receive. If you embrace it, it can be a very fulfilling and beautiful path in your life. ●