



The Marco Polo Way

An Interview with
Eric Waldburger, President, Marco Polo Hotels

EDITORS' NOTE A Swiss national, Eric Waldburger has over 38 years of experience in the hospitality industry, primarily in Asia. His prior roles include Chief Executive Officer and COO of Harbour Plaza Hotels & Resorts and General Manager of other prestigious hotels such as The Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong, The Peninsula Hong Kong, and The Mandarin Oriental Macau. Before joining Marco Polo Hotels, Waldburger operated his own hospitality consultancy firm, Esperienza Hospitality Ltd., providing hospitality related services to hotel owners and developers in Greater China. Waldburger is the founder and was the first President of the Macau Hotel Association.



Eric Waldburger

COMPANY BRIEF Marco Polo Hotels (www.marcopolohotels.com) is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Wharf (Holdings) Limited, a Hong Kong-listed company with core business interests in property and investments in communications and container-terminal operations. Marco Polo Hotels' roots are firmly in Asia, offering a hospitality experience that is warm, efficient, and distinctly Asian. Its hotels are located in key business centers in Asia-Pacific including Beijing, Foshan, Hong Kong, Jinjiang, Shenzhen, Suzhou, Wuban, and Xiamen in China; Cebu and Davao in the Philippines; and Phuket in Thailand.

Would you provide an overview of Marco Polo Hotels and a description of your properties?

Marco Polo Hotels is an exceptional Asian hotel group with contemporary luxury properties located at strategically important business centers and major cultural centers within China and the Asia-Pacific region. Each Marco Polo hotel is as distinctive and unique as the destination in which it resides and our portfolio of hotels continues to grow, preparing us to become one of the leading hotel brands in the region.

Marco Polo Hotels currently manages 13 properties. Eight more hotels are scheduled to open between now and 2017, located in Changzhou, Chengdu, Changsha, Chongqing, Guiyang, and Wuxi in China and in Manila in the Philippines.

Since its establishment in 1986, Marco Polo Hotels has been a market leader in the management and operation of outstanding hotel

properties, offering a hospitality experience that is warm, efficient, and distinctly Asian. The international class facilities, personal service, and the warmth of a Marco Polo welcome consistently exceed the expectations of the discerning traveler and those who know what it is to travel well.

Are there common traits that help differentiate your properties as Marco Polo or are you more focused on how each property fits into the local market?

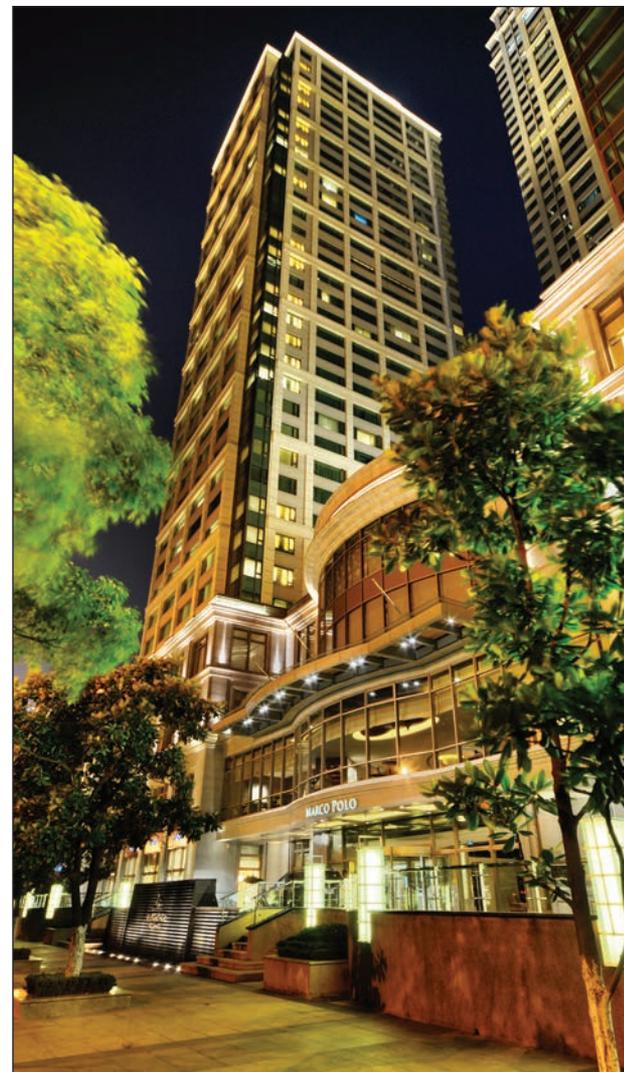
The Marco Polo Way is the essence of the Marco Polo brand that signifies our commitment and determination to deliver our mission to create value and exceed expectation. It is an ongoing commitment and promise of superior comfort, service, and genuine warmth and hospitality. Through the Marco Polo Way, customers immediately recognize a Marco Polo hotel, not only because of its look and feel but, most importantly, for its style in which service is delivered by every employee.



Many hoteliers speak about the challenges of being successful in the restaurant/food and beverage part of the business. What makes for a successful hotel restaurant?

To be successful in the restaurant business, one has to be creative and imaginative in terms of theme or the atmosphere one is portraying. Hotel restaurants, bars, and lounges need to provide not only an excellent food and beverage offering but also great entertainment value.

It is about creating a destination for in-house guests but more so for the local community. It is about providing the audience with what they have come to expect and what will satisfy their palate. We at Marco Polo do precisely that and therefore enjoy sustained high business volumes in all of our food and beverage facilities.



Marco Polo Hotels is a member of the Global Hotel Alliance (GHA). What makes GHA a good fit for you and would you highlight the value that it has brought to your properties?

In recent years, we have experienced significant growth in the Asian market, especially in China, and at least eight more hotels are scheduled to open within the next five years. Being a member of the Global Hotel Alliance has given us more global exposure and we are able to strengthen our competitive offers, giving our guests more choice and personal recognition, wherever they travel to in the world. We also benefit from being in alliance with the loyalty program, GHA Discovery, which enables us to communicate with a database of over three million loyal customers from around the world.

What has made this industry one where you have wanted to spend your career and what makes it so special for you?

From a very young age, I was attracted to the hospitality industry, partly because my grandfather was a hotelier and his fascination for the business was infectious. What makes this business so special for me is the ongoing interactive experience I enjoy with both guests and dedicated employees.

You have achieved much during your career. Do you ever think of slowing down?

There are times when I say to myself "How much longer?" As long as I get the buzz from enjoying what I do best, I will just keep going. ●

Marco Polo Lingnan Tiandi, Foshan (left); Marco Polo Wuhan (right); Three on Canton at Gateway Hong Kong (center)