

Distinct and Individual

An Interview with Warren Chiu,
Vice President, Development,
Warwick International Hotels



Winter Valley Warwick Resort and Spa, Dead Sea, Jordan (left); Warwick Melrose, Dallas (above)

EDITORS' NOTE Based in New York City, Warren Chiu is responsible for Warwick International Hotel's overall development in the U.S., Caribbean, and South Pacific regions. His responsibilities include a focus on repositioning many of the Warwick hotels in their respective markets. The project management team that Chiu established provides services exclusively for the company's ongoing hotel and resort development. Chiu obtained his B.A. in Architecture from Rhode Island School of Design and his M.Sc. in Hotel Management from New York University.



Warren Chiu

COMPANY BRIEF Warwick International Hotels (www.warwickhotels.com; WIH) is a privately owned company and has a blue-chip portfolio of hotels and resorts. Launched in 1980 with the purchase of the Warwick New York, Warwick International Hotels is celebrating more than three decades of hospitality excellence. The WIH Group now includes more than 55 prestigious hotels, resorts, and spas worldwide located in city centers and resort destinations in the United States, Europe, Asia, the South Pacific, and Africa.

Where does the name "Warwick" come from?

The name Warwick originates from our hotel in New York. The Warwick New York was the very first Warwick hotel in the company. In 1979, our founder and President, Richard Chiu, was so captivated by the history and beauty of the Warwick that it inspired him to develop a collection of hotels also derived from a strong identity and unique heritage. The hotel itself was built in 1926 by the press baron, William Randolph Hearst, who built the hotel for his lifelong love, Marion Davis.

Are there any common characteristics among the properties that speak to the core Warwick brand?

In essence, Warwick International Hotels are a collection of hotels and resorts worldwide. Each and every one of the Warwick Hotels carries some story that is often intertwined with the history of the city within which it's based.

A distinct characteristic that all Warwick hotels share is that they all exude independence and qualities relevant to their local cultures and identities. When you walk into the Warwick Hotel in Paris, you know you're in Paris and it feels like Paris.

Apart from the unique history revolving around Warwick Hotels, being centrally located is a common trait that our hotels share. All of our city hotels have the most desirable and sought after locations in their respective cities, and all of our resorts are built on the most beautiful sites to be found in the South Pacific. WIH has always believed that a good location for a hotel is a key factor in guest satisfaction.

Today, WIH has over 55 hotels and resorts worldwide. Should we expect to see over 100 hotels in the not too distant future?

Achieving the 100 mark would definitely be a great milestone for the company. The growth of WIH in the past decade has traditionally relied on a strategy that consists of four pillars.

The first pillar rests on the city center hotels in Europe and the U.S., which are fully capable of competing with the best hotels in their surroundings. The second pillar rests on resorts in the South Pacific where all of our resorts are found among the most desirable locations on the island. The third pillar is the development of our network of affiliate hotels, which share the WIH electronic and various reservation channels, including the WIH Web site, and GDS code and call centers. The fourth pillar is the latest — that is entering into management agreements.

The affiliation program is now well-established in the marketplace, providing easily accessible and efficient marketing and reservation services to independent hoteliers. There are now over 30 hotels in the WIH affiliation network. We will continue to solidify our affiliation program through improving our services to our independent hotel owners and seeking new relationships with like-minded people in the industry.

The core WIH strategy for the South Pacific is to become one of the best and largest hotel managers in the region. In Vanuatu, the Warwick Le Lagon resort is considered the best resort in the country and, in Samoa, construction of the first phase of our four-star resort development is due to start in early 2014.

For the city center hotels we own and operate directly, there are both short- and long-term renovation programs being implemented, and we continue to strengthen their management teams to ensure consistent and satisfactory service delivery to our guests.

In 2010, WIH entered the Middle East, which has been a strategic opportunity for us in

establishing WIH's ability to manage other owners' hotels. Since our first management contract in Jordan, we've added six more hotels under management contract in the Middle East, including the historical Babylon hotel in Iraq. Such an opportunity has allowed us to leverage WIH's experience of over 30 years of operating our wholly owned Warwick hotels.

Our recent addition in the Bahamas, the Paradise Island Resort, is our first hotel in the Caribbean. Our plan is to renovate the entire hotel in the latter part of 2014. The success in redeveloping the resort will undoubtedly facilitate WIH's future growth in the Caribbean market.

How does WIH manage its various target markets?

In the hotel industry, we deal with business and leisure markets. As we operate in different countries and cities, each of our hotels interacts with these two markets differently. On a macro level, we have strong relationships with a number of consortias and mega-agencies.

Where we are different from other hotel companies is our management at a micro level. Each Warwick hotel has its own unique strengths and attributes inherent within. Once their strengths are identified and potentials realized, the hotels are able to target niche markets, giving themselves competitive advantages in their respective local environments.

What differentiates WIH from your competitors?

Warwick Hotels as a company is different because it has been owned and managed solely by one family for the past 33 years. Although there are more than 55 hotels in the world, 18 are entirely owned and managed by ourselves. The other hotels are either affiliates of comparable standing, i.e. either four-star deluxe or five-star hotels, or under a management contract with WIH whereby we are directly responsible for the day-to-day operations. One common characteristic that all Warwick hotels share is that they are all privately owned by individuals or families, who take pride in ownership.

We also don't take a cookie-cutter approach to how the hotels are designed and even managed. While there are some common threads among the hotels that speak to the Warwick brand, such as a quality level of service, amenities or public areas that exude a residential feel, every Warwick hotel offers an experience that is distinct and individual, often referencing on the history of the hotel or its location to convey a sense of identity. ●