



A Service Legacy



A beach villa bedroom (left), and the Arrival Pavilion (above) in Krabi, Thailand at Phulay Bay, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve.

**An Interview with Hervé Humler,
President and Chief Operations Officer,
The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company**

EDITORS' NOTE Hervé Humler was named President and Chief Operations Officer of The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C. in August 2010. Humler began as an apprentice in the industry, learning every aspect of the hotel business from housekeeping to food preparation. In 1983, Humler became employee number four at the newly established Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company. Along with his small group of co-founders, Humler was instrumental in the creation of the mission statement and credo for which The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company has been known for 30 years. For much of his career at The Ritz-Carlton, Humler was responsible for the development of the brand's growing group of international hotels from Barcelona to Bali and Shanghai to Santiago. He earned a baccalaureate degree on Africa's Ivory Coast where he was raised.



Hervé Humler

COMPANY BRIEF Established in 1983 with the purchase of The Ritz-Carlton, Boston and the rights to the name Ritz-Carlton, The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company (www.ritzcarlton.com) has grown from one hotel to 80, and 31 branded Ritz-Carlton Clubs & Residences worldwide employing 38,000 ladies and gentlemen. The management company has plans to further expand in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Americas. The Ritz-Carlton also offers its Leadership Center as a resource for leading organizations interested in benchmarking the business practices that led to The Ritz-Carlton becoming a two-time recipient of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

What has made Ritz-Carlton so successful and has allowed the brand to perform so consistently over the years?

For 30 years, our company culture has resonated around the world; it is timeless. Along the way, we have assessed and addressed variables such as economies and the evolution of our guests. The Ritz-Carlton has never wavered from our foundation – selecting the most exceptional talent to anticipate and fulfill guests' needs. Delivery is key, and we have a benchmarked service legacy we are proud of. Our ladies and gentlemen maintain the integrity of the brand through onboarding, training, and reinforced daily internal communication shared globally, to ensure we create indelible memories for our guests.

Would you highlight your plans for growth and the key markets for expansion?

It has been an unprecedented year of expansion for The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company. December welcomed our 85th hotel worldwide, with more than 100 properties slated for portfolio by 2016. In 2013 alone, The Ritz-Carlton opened seven hotels internationally, including the company's debut in three countries: India, Kazakhstan, and Israel.

We also celebrated a milestone with our 10th hotel in China, with more tier-two cities in the pipeline. This year, we will introduce a property in Kyoto, our fourth hotel in Japan; a beautiful Southern California hotel near Palm Springs in Rancho Mirage; and a return to Bali in summer. The Ritz-Carlton Reserve brand extension embodies what today's premium luxury traveler is seeking – intimate settings offering authentic, enriching travel experiences. These distinctive resorts are currently in Krabi, Thailand, and Dorado Beach, Puerto Rico, with additional destinations planned for Morocco, Mexico, Panama, Vietnam, and beyond.

Are there consistent features within all Ritz-Carlton properties or do you cater each property to the specific market?

Within the past decade, we have completely evolved the design approach from a consistently traditional design model to one where no two hotels are the same. From Vienna to Georgetown, The Ritz-Carlton has reimagined former palaces and converted preserved heritage spaces. Our company design standards are the blueprint from which we establish engineering infrastructure, operational requirements, safety regulations, and room sizes – however, they do not drive the character of a hotel. Drawing on themes of local relevance, we adopt design strategies to enhance the brand image in an increasingly global marketplace.

Would you highlight Ritz-Carlton's investment in technology and the impact that has had on the business?

Our parent company, Marriott International, has been very aggressive in the innovation space enterprise-wide, which greatly benefits our brand by providing infrastructure, expertise, and resources to operate hotels globally within the top-tier luxury segment. The Ritz-Carlton also embraces technology to deliver a seamless guest experience anytime, anywhere, on our guests' terms.

We continue to make significant efforts to build out the digital guest experience with 11 channels currently, including The Ritz-Carlton Mobile App and most recently, entering China's digital space on Sina Weibo. We are engaging guests everyday through our digital, mobile, and social platforms to become a deeper part of their lives. They, in turn, are sharing their own memories through user-generated content.

What has made Ritz-Carlton so successful on the restaurant/food and beverage side of the business?

Another virtue of being part of a global brand is the caliber of culinary talent that provides another sense of travel – epicurean journeys. Our food and beverage strategy is defined by our goal to emotionally connect with our customers. The vision for our hotels around the world is to provide experiential, handcrafted, and relevant culinary experiences to guests and locals. In addition to dynamic dining concepts, these venues are also inspired by their environs; so much of our success stems from being the social epicenter where our neighbors gather, meet, and celebrate milestones.

How do you maintain such consistent service standards, and how are you able to ensure that you are meeting your service goals?

Everything at The Ritz-Carlton is well-defined and clearly communicated, like our credo and our motto, which guide our ladies and gentlemen to serve our guests consistently. Our philosophy is based on trust, respect, and integrity, which translates around the world. As a result, we do not change our core values but rather modify execution based on the labor market and local nuances.

What are your key priorities for Ritz-Carlton as you look to the future?

We have never stopped listening to what our customers have been asking for. Per their request, continued global growth remains at the forefront of our development as an organization.

At The Ritz-Carlton, we keep our pulse on our current and future luxury guests. We know that the global affluent consumer values heritage brands that are authentic and have a strong story to tell. These guests want a memorable experience, and they want to know that our hotels contribute to a better world through social responsibility. They want to engage with brands they trust, on their own time, in their own style. Our priority is to remain laser-focused on guest engagement and the relentless training of our ladies and gentlemen to ensure they connect with every guest to create unique, personal, and memorable experiences. ●