



EDITORS' NOTE Nicholas Clayton joined Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts in his current post in April 2012. He previously acted as President and later CEO of the Viceroy Hotel Group, where he led a team of 3,500 in 15 properties to deliver the highest standards of excellence from 2006 to 2012. His earlier career included 14 years with Ritz-Carlton in the United States, Australia, and finally Singapore where he was Managing Director of the Ritz-Carlton Millenia. He joined Mandarin Oriental in 2001 as Senior Vice President - Operations based in Hong Kong where he was responsible for the group's 18 Asian and European properties.

COMPANY BRIEF Jumeirah Group (www.jumeirah.com), the global luxury hotel company and a member of Dubai Holding, operates a world-class portfolio of hotels and resorts. Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts includes Jumeirah at Etihad Towers in Abu Dhabi; Burj Al Arab, managed by Jumeirah, Jumeirah Beach Hotel, Jumeirah Creekside Hotel, Jumeirah Emirates Towers, Jumeirah Zabeel Saray and Madinat Jumeirah in Dubai; Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa in Kuwait; Jumeirah Bilgah Beach Hotel in Baku; Jumeirah Dhevanafushi and Jumeirah Vittaveli in the Maldives; Jumeirah Himalayas Hotel in Shanghai; Jumeirah Frankfurt in Germany; Jumeirah Grand Hotel via Veneto in Rome; Jumeirah Port Soller Hotel & Spa in Mallorca, Spain; Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah in Istanbul; as well as Jumeirah Carlton Tower and Jumeirah Lowndes Hotel in London. Jumeirah Group also runs the luxury serviced residences brand Jumeirah Living™; the wellness brand Talise; Jumeirah Restaurants; Wild Wadi Waterpark™; The Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management; and Sirius™, its global loyalty program.

What is the secret to the success of this company?

At only 16 years old, Jumeirah has enjoyed tremendous success. Over the past few years, the company has seen significant growth, which was based on activities and plans that were launched pre-crisis.

Even in a difficult period, the company added 10 hotels.

The company culture is real and it's ripe – it's about people, thoughtfulness, and understanding the combination of colleague and customer importance.

A Sense of Place

An Interview with Nicholas Clayton,
Chief Operating Officer,
Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts

Are there certain characteristics that are distinctly Jumeirah?

The sense of place is important. There is no mistaking the uniqueness of the location you are at while staying at a Jumeirah property. Each property is tailored to the local market. The hotels don't look alike – they're architecturally different.

My philosophy is that, even if you build and manage a city hotel, make the amenities of leisure origin and use. This is understood at each property.

People want the predictability of great service, while having access to exciting and innovative offerings.

Who is the Jumeirah client?

We appeal to and attract affluent consumers. Our iconic hotel, Burj Al Arab, takes that to the highest level. There are 200 double-story suites, although the hotel looks like it could have 1,000 rooms. We change our pricing based on season, but the annual average is in excess of \$2,000 per night. In the hotel, we have nearly 2,000 employees for 200 keys; we have 250 butlers – this means every guest gets that service.

Heads of State and royalty stay with us, as well as those from the entertainment industry. We have customers from Europe, Russia, CIS, and quite a few from the U.S. Americans are traveling more to Dubai; less so to the Maldives, although that is starting to change as people explore new parts of the world.

Where will your growth come from?

We own a limited number of hotels, but our next investment is in Dubai – we're building another property on the beach where we have a concentration already.

It will be 435 keys, and it's a full-service hotel with beautiful specs that will have great results.

Our growth is dependent upon development partners who create properties that are consistent with Jumeirah standards, meaning, they are architecturally strong, designed by innovative interior design firms, and nontraditional: ready for the future.

How important is expansion throughout North America?

Some brand equity has been lost in North America because our former hotel in New York is no longer under the Jumeirah flag; that was the connection for North Americans to our brand.

We want to be in the obvious key cities. It will happen when the opportunities come about or when we decide to force them, but it's critical to us.

We currently have eight employees in the North American market actively selling.



Nicholas Clayton with Burj Al Arab in Dubai in the background (left); the exterior of Jumeirah Grand Hotel via Veneto in Rome (above)

What makes for a successful hotel restaurant?

We have more than 60 restaurants in Dubai, and they are lucrative. The best bars and restaurants in the city are in hotels.

We decided this element is important; it enhances the revPAR, and the brand is going to do it well.

We're doing about 25 restaurant renovations in Dubai in 2014 and 2015 to help enhance the restaurants' performance. Internationally, because the restaurants are licensed, we have a competitive advantage; we've built some extraordinary restaurants.

Shanghai is a market where hotel restaurants are also very popular, so that's another place to enhance the hotel experience with top food and beverage.

In Europe, we try to create heavy bar trade, minimize our exposure, and be darn sure we have a good thing going. We don't shy from the restaurant part, but we're realistic about it.

How far do you go with the spa product?

In a number of our hotels, the developer had a spa vision that we were delighted to see as we partnered.

With Jumeirah Zabeel Saray, it's almost like the hotel was built around the spa.

In Kuwait, the spa is the highlight; in Rome, for a city hotel with 120 keys, it has a notable product.

So we got lucky – we have properties where the spa was well thought out, and can be marketed.

For leisure traffic, the spa component is critical. We're hoping to build our capability around our spa brand, Talise.

How have you enhanced your technology offering without losing the personal touch?

I don't see the luxury side changing its emphasis on human interaction. I see many of today's technological offerings as a way to court a group of people who like to "play" with technology.

We offer an app that allows us to communicate with our guests as they check in; they can use it to find out more about what is going on while they are staying on property.

We have piloted a unit in Madinat that controls everything in the room. It was about \$20,000 U.S. per room to put in place. We have it in 10 large suites.

Overall, we try to have just enough technology, where the guests have convenience and stay connected, but don't lose the human touch that is a key component of Jumeirah's service. ●