

# Hospitality

## New Luxury in Orlando



*A guest suite at Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort*

**An Interview with Thomas Steinhauer,  
General Manager, Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort**

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Thomas Steinhauer assumed his current post in 2013. An 18-year veteran of Four Seasons, Steinhauer made the transition to Orlando in July, joining the pre-opening team as the Resort prepared to open in 2014. His more than 30-year hotel management career has taken him across the globe. He has developed deep industry knowledge and expertise at key Four Seasons properties including the iconic Four Seasons Hotel New York and Four Seasons Hotel Boston. He also served as General Manager and Regional Vice President of the Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea.*



*Thomas Steinhauer*

**PROPERTY BRIEF** *Set to open in 2014, Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Walt Disney World® Resort (fourseasons.com/Orlando) is located within the gates of a residential community, Golden Oak at Walt Disney World® Resort, which is just five miles from the Magic Kingdom® Park and four miles from Epcot®. Accommodations include 443 guest rooms and 68 suites with versatile connecting options ideal for families and groups of friends traveling together. A Tom Fazio-designed golf course will be refurbished and managed by Four Seasons. Indoor and outdoor treatments will be enjoyed in the spa's 18 treatment rooms and gardens. The five restaurants will include a modern Italian ristorante, a southern poolside BBQ experience, and a 17th floor rooftop steakhouse with views of the nightly fireworks at the Magic Kingdom® Park and Epcot®.*

### **How will a Four Seasons property in Orlando change the landscape?**

Orlando sees over 50 million visitors a year given all of the attractions, Disney being at the forefront historically. However, when it comes to true luxury product, there are only a handful of properties currently in this city.

Either these other properties are fully surrounded by Disney theming – the Grand Floridian comes to mind – or like with the Ritz and Waldorf, which are considered luxury properties and wonderful brands, they are connected with big box hotels. The Marriott and Hilton are right there and they share some of the facilities with those more group-oriented hotels and resorts.

The true differentiator for us is that we're a luxury property, period. We're not associated with anything else. Also, we're in the actual Walt Disney World® area, but we are also just far enough away. While you can totally submerge into Disney, when you want to come out of the parks, we're in the perfect location for which to get away.

We're about 10 minutes away from the Magic Kingdom by car and we're surrounded by an incredible high-end, multimillion-dollar residential community being developed. We're the anchor property sitting on 23 acres, just for the resort itself.

The oasis is created by the property being directly bordered by woods all around us and the golf course. It truly gives one the feeling of getting away.

It's important that when our guests visit – be it honeymooners, couples who want to get away, or families – that we will be able to offer something for everyone. Everything we have learned that Four Seasons guests are looking for has been integrated into this property.

From a design perspective, we have a beautiful lazy river that meanders around a palm island next to an incredible kid-friendly activity area and we also have a separate adult pool. In addition, we have two ballrooms with very high-end finishes, which are the only ballrooms in the area offering natural light.

We can balance the needs of different guests based on our unique design and layout of the resort.

### **What is the vision for your food and beverage product, and how challenging is it to be successful in that area?**

Quality is key, and you need to understand your guest. If I'm in a city hotel and I'm surrounded by all kinds of restaurants within walking distance, it's a much different approach than when I'm in a resort that is basically its own destination. When people are on vacation, they prefer to stay on property if the dining options are diverse and of high quality.

We looked at the most popular and desirable concepts, and then added a bit of an edge to them. For instance, the steak and seafood concept has been popular. But in our particular case, our restaurant with this

concept is located on the top of the resort with incredible views of the fireworks, and with a display kitchen and a buzzing bar available to guests. Then you add quality of food and beverage, and knowledgeable staff. We also took that steak and seafood concept and added a Spanish twist to it with our Capa restaurant, which is designed with a matador theme.

The main restaurant on the ground floor facing all of our beautiful gardens is called Ravello and offers a modern Italian approach. We have indoor and outdoor seating – a bar, counter seating, private dining rooms, and a separate display kitchen where we can have cooking demo dinners.

We designed the Italian concept to have a lot of activity and we offer many interesting dishes from different regions of Italy. We have a bar associated with that restaurant, the Ravello Bar, which will be one floor up on the lobby level. It will not be a typical lounge but will have 160 seats with both indoor and outdoor seating. It will be a fun destination for small bites and great cocktails, and will have an active atmosphere just off the lobby.

Outside, near the pools, we have a great lake that meanders through our property and overlooking what will be PB&G restaurant, where we've added a southern smokehouse and rotisserie to the traditional sandwich-type offerings.

At the golf clubhouse that we're presently renovating, we have implemented a Cuban American twist to the burgers and salads.

Here, you also need a great takeout place, something that gives guests a great option on-the-go, so we provide that in a fun place called Lickety-Split.

### **What is it about the industry that has kept you in it for your entire career?**

I'm still excited by being able to do things that make people happy. It's irreplaceable. You find people who are invested in this and make sure they have the right tools, and the energy then feeds into a great team atmosphere.

Four Seasons is a wonderful brand because it gives one the ability to tap into a vast pool of knowledge. With all the locations we have, it provides opportunities to challenge the people who run the individual properties in specific localities. It's a great combination of brand strength and entrepreneurial action. ●