



## Stay Different

An Interview with Austin Frost,  
Vice President Sales & Marketing – Europe  
and Americas, Jumeirah Hotels and Resorts



Jumeirah Dhevanafushi - Maldives (left);  
Jumeirah Port Soller Hotel & Spa - Mallorca, Spain (above)

**EDITORS' NOTE** Austin Frost has held his current post since May 2012 with the recent addition of overseeing the Americas as of September 2016. Prior to this, he was Vice President-Sales and Marketing with Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts as well as Vice President-International Sales.



Austin Frost

**COMPANY BRIEF** Jumeirah Group (Jumeirah.com), the global luxury hotel company and a member of Dubai Holding, operates a world-class portfolio of hotels and resorts including the flagship Burj Al Arab Jumeirah. Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts manages properties in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, UAE, and Kuwait in the Middle East; Frankfurt, Istanbul, London, and Mallorca (Spain) in Europe; and the Maldives and Shanghai in Asia. Jumeirah Group also runs the luxury service residences brand Jumeirah Living™ with properties in London and Dubai; the new contemporary lifestyle hotel brand Venu™; the wellness brand Talise™; Jumeirah Restaurant Group Dubai™; Wild Wadi Waterpark™; The Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management™; and Jumeirah Sirius™, its global loyalty program. Future openings include luxury and lifestyle hotels in China, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Oman, Russia, and the UAE.

### How do you describe the Jumeirah difference?

We pride ourselves on having three key brand differentiators. We define one as our being imaginative and exhilarating, which is about creating out-of-the-box experiences for our guests.

The second is about being culturally connected. We make sure that each of our hotels, no matter their location, reflects the local culture and that the respective property team plays an active role in the community to provide authentic guest experiences.

Finally, it's about being thoughtful and generous in terms of ensuring a high level of service and hospitality. This is a fundamental part of the Jumeirah experience and one that is cascaded through all departments in the training process.

All of that, in many ways, is encompassed by our brand promise, which is "Stay

Different." Our goal is for our guests to depart with the sense that it was a really unique experience – and that is reflected in the feedback we receive. Our guests value the experiences that only we can provide.

### What characteristics define a Jumeirah property?

We ensure that all of our hotels have the fundamental foundation of what we consider Jumeirah brand standards.

We aim to maintain a very high standard of service and interaction with guests across all properties – a distinction we hope is recognized as part of the Jumeirah experience.

In addition, we encourage our general managers and executive team members to become involved in the local community to bring that level of interaction full circle.

### What are your growth opportunities?

Today, we operate 21 hotels in eight countries – we have seven in Europe and eight properties in the Gulf area, as well as two resorts in the Maldives and a property in Shanghai.

From 2017 to 2021, we have a total of 24 projects set to open, and most of our focus is on China and Asia, with a few properties in India. We're also looking to open three or four in our home territory of the Gulf region. We see those as growth areas because of the travel volume to Dubai.

By 2020, we will look to North America. However, that is not to say if the right opportunity presents itself before then, we would not consider it.

### For Jumeirah, how critical is the food and beverage part of the business and is that an area where you can drive revenue?

It is critical – particularly for our resorts that see more leisure business. The leisure market also tends to stay longer than our corporate guests, and is somewhat more captive. We have managed our own food and beverage since the company was formed several years ago and have found it to be a successful approach. One of the keys to our food and beverage operation is that, in order to have a high capture ratio, we have to be creative and ensure that our offerings are both high quality and provide good value. It's a very competitive market, but celebrity chefs are often a good way to attract more customers. This is something

we've recently determined having worked with Nathan Outlaw, a Michelin-starred chef from the UK, to debut a revamp of the popular seafood restaurant at Burj Al Arab Jumeirah as Nathan Outlaw at Al Mahara.

### Are you operating your spas as well?

Yes, Talise is Jumeirah's global wellness brand. We ensure that our standards across the spas are virtually the same regardless of location or size. Talise Ottoman Spa at Jumeirah Zabeel Saray, for instance, is the largest spa in the UAE and has won many awards. We always strive to keep up with the latest trends and reflect those offerings in the experience.

### How do you make sure you're providing the technology for those who need it but, in doing so, you're not losing the human touch?

We tend to look at technology as assisting and complementing the human touch rather than the first point of contact.

For instance, we ensure we have the capabilities to fast-track the check-in process and incorporate useful technology in the guest rooms, though we always make sure there is a human element.

From an innovation perspective, we offer a fully immersive digital travel platform called Jumeirah Inside, which we developed in collaboration with Google last year. It was a first in the hotel industry – accessible on our website and now in its second phase through a mobile application using Google Cardboard devices. Its a virtual platform comprising 360-degree video and photography, which enables users to make hotel bookings, access never-before-seen footage, and discover hidden treasures to share with the world.

### How did you end up in the hospitality business?

When I was in college in Ireland, I worked on my parents' farm during the summer months. There are two castles nearby that host medieval banquets and I worked evenings there in operations. I enjoyed that experience and come graduation, I looked into hospitality as a career. I enrolled at what was then the Regional Technical College in Galway and took courses in hotel management and behavioral science. It wasn't until my fourth year, however, that I realized this was the career for me – the science of how people operate and the diversity of the hotel industry was too enticing not to try. After all these years, I am still enjoying it. ●