

Embracing the Harmony of Opposites

An Interview with
S. Steven Pan, Executive Chairman,
Regent Hotels & Resorts and FIH Regent Group



*The Regent Lounge at the Regent Beijing (left);
 Exterior of the Regent Porto Montenegro (above)*

EDITORS' NOTE Steven Pan joined FIH Regent Group—owner of Regent Taipei—in 1991 and became President in 1992. In 2000, he led a management buyout of the company and became Executive Chairman. The company acquired Regent Hotels & Resorts from Carlson in 2010. Pan also founded Pacific Resources Group in San Francisco in 1994, and the group has since completed many landmark transactions in San Francisco, Tokyo, and Hong Kong.



S. Steven Pan

COMPANY BRIEF Regent (regenthotels.com) was founded in the '70s and became the first truly Asian-based global hospitality group. In the '80s and '90s, Regent properties such as the Regent Hong Kong and Regent Beverly Wilshire were among some of the world's most acclaimed hotels. In 1992, eight Regent hotels were recognized by Condé Nast Traveler as among the Top 25 Hotels in the World, with more than half of the best 14 hotels on earth carrying the Regent name. The brand was later sold to Four Seasons and then to Carlson before finally being acquired by FIH Regent Group. The existing Regents are located in Bali, Beijing, Berlin, Phuket, Taipei, Turks & Caicos, and Singapore. In 2011, all hotels in the Regent-managed portfolio were listed as the best luxury hotels in the world by the Condé Nast Traveler's Readers' Choice Awards, becoming the first and only international luxury hotel group to ever achieve this recognition. In 2013, the group was fifth in the worldwide ranking of the World Luxury Index measuring the most searched and sought-after luxury hotels.

FIH Regent Group (fibregent.com) is the largest and most profitable hotel company listed on the Taiwan Stock Exchange, with market capitalization in excess of \$1 billion. FIH Regent Group owns flagship Regent Taipei, which has consistently been one of the most profitable Regent Hotels in the world. Regent Taipei also pioneered the first true luxury hotel shopping concept—Regent Galleria, anchored by Chanel, Hermès, Dior, Graff, Harry Winston, and 50 other luxury brands.

Would you discuss the history and heritage of the Regent brand and how you define the "Regent DNA"?

We embody gracious and intuitive Asian hospitality in the framework of service in every Regent hotel. We serve our guests as we would want to be served. We celebrate our guest's individuality

and their penchant for travel, and build a culture of continuous relevant engagement and collaboration as we are leading the way to a more relational rather than just a transactional relationship with our guests.

We were the first hotel group to recognize the importance of a spacious bathroom, creating the concept that guests spend more waking time in their bathrooms, than in their bedrooms. We were the first hotel group to provide guests with dedicated private swimming pools in their villa suites. We were the first hotel group to provide our guests with "in-room check-in." We introduced the concept of urban resort through Regent Hong Kong, which boasted in-room Jacuzzis, spacious pools, and open expansive harbor views that created a calm oasis in busy Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong. We were the first hotel group to offer the first true luxury hotel shopping destination with the opening of the Regent Galleria in Taipei, anchored by Chanel, Hermès, Dior, Graff, Harry Winston, and 50 other luxury brands.

We were, and still are, the first truly Asia-based global hospitality group in an industry previously dominated by European and American brands, and we remain true to the philosophy that was coined by Robert Burns, "The only thing we specialize in is luxury, and the only thing our hotels have in common is the fact that they are all unique."

Where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth for Regent?

Our most recent opening was in December with the Regent Chongqing, situated in the new bustling business center of Sichuan Province in Southwest China between the confluence of the Yangtze and Jialing rivers, conveniently across the river from the old city center and just a short 30-minute drive from the Chongqing Jiangbei International Airport. It is also within walking distance to Chongqing's Opera House and Science Museum, and mere moments away from the city's new large-scale shopping center.

Scheduled for late 2017, Regent Harbin will boast 250 rooms and 34 suites. The hotel will be situated in the commercial, business, and exhibition area of Harbin, one of northeast China's major cities and often referred to as the "Oriental Paris" for its mix of Western and Chinese cultures, with designs reflecting the city's renowned Gothic, Baroque, and Byzantine architecture.

Regent is returning to Jakarta in 2018 with a brand new mixed-use hotel and residential complex. The hotel will offer 54 rooms and 72 suites, as well as 87 exclusive residences. It will form part of the new Mangkuluhur City development, with myriad shopping, dining, and entertainment options.

In North America, Regent Hotels & Resorts has signed a partnership agreement with the prominent North American property developer Cottonwood Management to see Regent Hotels & Resorts return to the North American market following a 10-year absence with the launch of two new mixed-use developments in Boston and New York City. The future holds continued growth for us and we balance this growth with developing a stellar management team to ensure clear understanding of our service philosophy at every level of our business.

We are also currently talking to business partners in both Kitzbuhel and Vienna in Austria, Venice in Italy, and the Algarve in Portugal, and we have our phase II project in Porto Montenegro, Zurich and Crans Montana in Switzerland, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto in Japan, Bali, Guangzhou and Sanya in China, and both Kuala Lumpur and Langkawi in Malaysia.

Regent is known for the highest service standards. Is luxury today more about personalized service and customizing the guest experience?

This generation of luxury guests today is more discreet than in the past. As a result, the scale and feel of new Regent has changed. A city hotel will be around 250 rooms and will provide personalized service, as well as the feel of privacy and discretion as opposed to the traditional sense of grandeur.

What are your key priorities for Regent as you look to the future?

Regent has a legacy of innovation enabled by our ambicultural DNA; thus, our concept embraces the harmony of opposites: global yet local, simple yet elegant, and modern yet timeless. Every Regent will be unique to its locale and aligned to its ownership unlike the standardization prevalent in hotel industry. We believe the future calls for this distinctive concept and creative business model to succeed.

The future holds continued growth for us and we balance this growth with developing a management team to ensure a clear understanding of our service philosophy at every level of our business. ●