



Experiencing Turks & Caicos



An Interview with Karen S. Whitt,
Vice-President Sales and Marketing of The Hartling Group:
The Palms Turks & Caicos, The Shore Club Long Bay
and The Sands at Grace Bay

Balcony of the Oceanfront Penthouse at The Palms Turks & Caicos (left);
The Shore Club Long Bay Executive Penthouse living area (above)

EDITORS' NOTE Karen Whitt serves as Vice-President of Sales and Marketing of The Hartling Group in Turks & Caicos. She served as General Manager of the The Palms from February 2011 to December 2015, and she brings more than 20 years of hospitality industry experience to the landmark properties in the Hartling Group collection. She is an active board member of the Turks & Caicos Hotel and Tourism Association and serves as First Vice-President of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association. Whitt serves as a volunteer to numerous civic and professional organizations on the island including the National Cancer Society. In 2010 and 2012, she was named "Hotelier of the Year" in Turks & Caicos. She was also awarded the prestigious title of "Top General Manager Worldwide" by Luxury Travel Advisor at their March 2014 Awards of Excellence Ultra Summit.



Karen S. Whitt

COMPANY BRIEF The Hartling Group (hartlinggroup.com) is a resort management and real estate sales and development firm specializing in luxury Caribbean resorts, condominiums and villas. Projects to-date include The Sands at Grace Bay, a picturesque development set on the shores of Grace Bay; The Palms Turks & Caicos, awarded the world's best spa resort; and the company's newest development project, The Shore Club on Long Bay, featuring a village-like, low-density resort development inspired by traditional Barbadian architecture on the pristine Long Bay Beach on Providenciales. Hartling Group resorts are the choice for the most discerning visitors and consistently recognized as leading resorts in the Turks & Caicos Islands. The Palms and The Shore Club are named among the top resorts in the world by the leading travel publications including Condé Nast Traveler and Travel + Leisure.

Will you discuss the state of the travel business in Turks & Caicos and has there been growth in the market?

The success of this market goes back many years when the platform was being set for the hospitality and tourism industry in Turks & Caicos. The pioneers at the time did a very good job mapping out and executing their vision for a low-density luxury destination that appealed to the high-end demographic.

There is room for growth and we're seeing interest from luxury brands that fit the vision for the industry in the country. Turks & Caicos was built largely on the condo/resort business model, which lends itself to a higher-level product. We have these amazing resorts that are built and centered around million-dollar-plus condos. This creates an environment of a very high-end luxury product.

While Providenciales is limited by its size, there are still some opportunities for growth with projects that have broken ground recently, including a Ritz-Carlton. There are a few others that have also expressed interest in developing here.

As we continue to mature as a destination and become better known in the industry, we are now looking at our sister islands, North Caicos, East Caicos and South Caicos, which are emerging because of their similar flora and fauna, and the breathtaking coastline which is every bit as exquisite as what we have in Providenciales.

How are your properties positioned in the market and do you look at them as complementary properties?

The Palms Turks & Caicos has been a landmark property on Grace Bay for 14 years now. It was one of the very first high-end luxury condo resorts in Turks & Caicos. The Shore Club on the North Shore, or Long Bay side of the island, is complementary to our flagship resort, The Palms. The Shore Club is an oasis on its own in a very pristine, untouched four-mile stretch of Long Bay Beach, which is a different orientation than Grace Bay Beach.

Long Bay is very smooth with calm and shallow waters, and it lends itself to a more active water sports venue. Kiteboarding is very popular, paddle boarding is very easy, and kayaking is a great option because the waters are shallow at the start.

The Shore Club was designed and built to appeal to an affluent demographic with more of an active lifestyle. It's a very trendy but chic property, and being new, it features a lot of the modern technology and the latest advances that some of the other resorts may not feature.

We see the two properties as being super complementary to each other, and we have even promoted a beach-to-beach package where people can actually stay two nights at The Palms and two nights at The Shore Club. If one is adventurous and wants to experience both properties, they can. We also have a shuttle that runs between our three hotels all day, including The Sands. One major element that distinguishes The Shore Club from The Palms and from many other resorts in Turks & Caicos is our villa product. Our private villas are very exclusive – 8,800-square-foot beachfront estates with six bedrooms and all of the amenities one would expect in a luxury villa product, but with the advantage of being situated inside a luxury resort. If guests want to escape from their villa and enjoy a restaurant or another pool or a different orientation, they are close by, so it's convenient to have the best of both worlds.

Will you discuss the role The Hartling Group plays for both of these properties?

Stan Hartling, CEO and founder of The Hartling Group, came to the island 25 years ago and developed his first resort, The Sands at Grace Bay, a four-star property which just celebrated 20-years on Grace Bay Beach. The Sands remains a favorite resort for many, with the highest returning guest ratio on the island.

Stan was at the forefront of the development of Turks & Caicos Islands and shared with the government his vision to create these amazing luxury properties.

Not only has he invested and reinvested for a third time on the island, but he has also been dedicated to enhancing the community through civic and charitable organizations and contributions. This helps not only the growth of his individual businesses, but also ensures that we're doing our part within the community for the welfare of the people.

The Hartling Group expanded its platform with The Palms and The Shore Club, both members of Virtuoso and represent the most elite and elegant of luxury properties. Although the condos are individually owned, The Hartling Group manages these assets for the condo owners while it also operates everything on the resort segment including hotel and grounds operations, food and beverage, spa and retail. ●