

A Seaside Luxury Haven

An Interview with Deborah Yager Fleming,
Chief Executive Officer & Partner, Acqualina Resort & Residences on the Beach

EDITORS' NOTE Deborah Yager Fleming joined Acqualina Resort & Residences in March 2004 after having served as Vice President, Sales & Marketing at Island Outpost, where she managed marketing campaigns for 12 boutique hotels. She also garnered valuable experience in New York at Leading Hotels of the World where she held senior management positions and implemented the design of worldwide sales strategies and innovative marketing programs.



Deborah Yager Fleming

PROPERTY BRIEF With a lushly landscaped 4.5-acres of seaside bliss, world-class restaurants, curated amenities and spacious rooms and suites all with balconies and water views, Acqualina Resort & Residences on the Beach (acqualinaresort.com) is at the center of Miami's Sunny Isles Beach providing an exclusive experience and an ultra-luxurious beach lifestyle. As Florida's only hotel of its kind, built open to the sea with no structural or visual barriers, Acqualina evokes a Mediterranean lifestyle just steps off the pristine sand into the Atlantic. The lush grounds are dotted with umbrellas in the resort's signature red color and lounge chairs punctuate the blue and green hues of its natural surroundings. The property is the recipient of the coveted Forbes Five Star Award and the AAA Five Diamond Award. TripAdvisor named Acqualina as the Best Beachfront Resort in the U.S. for six years in a row. Acqualina Resort & Residences was recently recognized by the Global Biorisk Advisory Council, a division of ISSA – The Worldwide Cleaning Industry Association, as a confirmed GBAC Star accredited facility acknowledging Acqualina's increasing best practices and protocols for sanitation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

How has Acqualina Resort adapted its business during these unprecedented times and how proud are you to see the way your team has performed during the crisis?

The well-being and safety of our employees, guests, and residents is our highest priority. While we have reinforced our extremely high standards of health and safety and have enhanced measures of sanitation and cleanliness in place, we ask our guests to wear masks or face coverings when traversing throughout the property and

to practice social distancing. We inform guests pre-arrival if they are feeling under the weather not to visit Acqualina until they are feeling better. We have implemented more flexibility, allowing guests to move any pre-booked dates which can be arranged through our reservations department.

Our entire team has been trained on the importance of PPE (personal protective equipment) to keep themselves and the community at large safe and healthy. The team has done a superb job of educating our guests,

residents and visitors on the importance of wearing a mask as well as preparing for our customers' arrival. Every detail of our service sequence at each outlet was reviewed and revised to ensure that we continue to provide a luxurious experience while being mindful of the pandemic. We take temperature checks upon arrival and at elevators which are staffed 24 hours a day. Guests can also expect to have their temperatures checked again when visiting our spa or fitness center. We have limited the capacity in both of these areas to ensure social distancing is practiced at all times. While enhanced safety and cleanliness practices in the midst of COVID-19 is critical, our team has also added new services so that our guests may enjoy the luxurious elements of a five-star resort. We created new Guest Experience Manager positions so that each guest is given an even more personalized experience. Our GEMs, as we warmly refer to them, will curate all aspects of the guest's stay from customizing the private bar, coordinating shopping lists and ordering groceries and booking dining reservations to offering a virtual tour and showing a video of the room orientation. Our GEMs will be contacting guests via email, by phone or even Zoom, whatever they prefer, and will be the main point of contact prior to arrival and throughout the stay to ensure that all needs are met and exceeded. Our GEMs also reserve exclusive beachfront dinners and arrange for our chefs to create custom menus for everyone to enjoy. I am immensely proud of the entire Acqualina team for their unwavering and tireless efforts to create a wonderful environment where one can feel truly relaxed and pampered.

What additional procedures and protocols has Acqualina put into place to provide guests with confidence around safety and health concerns when visiting the property?



Acqualina Resort & Residences on the Beach

In addition to temperature checks and wearing masks, we use EPA-approved electrostatic disinfectant tools in all rooms and public areas. We also have several branded items such as sanitized television remotes sealed in Acqualina red boxes allowing guests to feel safe, confident and comfortable when staying at Acqualina. As part of the resort's sanitization measures, guests can expect to see Plexiglass dividers at the front desk, security station and concierge, Acqualina-branded social distancing floor mats, an Acqualina-branded digital hand sanitizer stand at the front entrance and other self-standing hand sanitizers strategically positioned throughout the property, and Acqualina-branded ceramic hand pump sanitizer dispensers located throughout the resort. White trays are also conveniently available at our restaurants to place face masks on when dining. Upon check in, guests receive Acqualina-branded hand sanitizers, alcohol wipes and face masks enclosed in a branded pouch for personal use.

A key part of the guest experience is the Acqualina app providing the continuation of personalized attention and keeping with our award-winning service. An iPad is available in all guestrooms and suites and guests are also encouraged to download the Acqualina app to their own devices. Features include customizing one's stay with special requests such as extra pillows and selecting times for room cleaning and turndown to ordering pre-arrival amenities. Online cabana bookings can be made and soon guests will be able to order food while at the pools and beach. Guests can also view flight information, check in for their flight and read the daily newspaper and magazines, request complimentary best-selling books and much more.

Will you provide an overview of the property and what have been the keys to Acqualina's success?

Acqualina is a place where the charm of a Mediterranean villa meets elegance on the beach. We are a seaside luxury haven located on 4.5 beachfront acres in pristine Sunny Isles Beach, Miami. We offer 98 guest rooms and suites and 188 residences with breathtaking views of the Atlantic Ocean, great dining including Il Mulino New York and our new restaurant Ke-uH offering Japanese fusion cuisine, three oceanfront swimming pools and an innovative marine biology-based children's program. There are a variety of wonderful exterior venues to provide an ideal background for intimate weddings and celebratory events. In addition, we have the only ESPA-branded spa in the United States, an exquisite 20,000-square-foot, two-story tranquil sanctuary of excellence and relaxation.

Acqualina's success is due to our happy, dedicated team members whose passion, creativity and genuine care and attention towards every customer is felt in the service delivery. As a family-owned and operated hotel, we are an independent brand able to quickly implement new services and frequently meet with our leaders to provide the support they need to exceed expectations. We offer a great living experience, trust and great value and the world's finest residential and resort community. Our dream makers culture of inspired team members who deliver guests and residents dreams has resulted in high repeat business creating the foundation for our success.

How critical is it for Acqualina to be engaged in the community and to build relationships with local residents?

Very critical. A large part of our business is driven from the local community. As a lifestyle brand, we offer exceptional dining and spa facilities that are open to the local community. In addition, we run an ultra-luxury residential complex. Acqualina Resort and Residences opened in 2006, and our second residential tower which

features 79 Mansions opened in 2015. We are currently constructing two new residential Estates towers which will offer 248 residences in the sky and a world-renowned restaurant from New York City which will be open to the public.

We are an active participant in the Sunny Isles Beach Tourism and Marketing Council and the Aventura Marketing Council as well as the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau and Greater Miami & the Beaches Hotel Association. Acqualina also proudly supports the Miami Chapter of the "I Have a Dream" Foundation. The Foundation empowers children in low-income local communities to achieve higher education and fulfill their leadership potential by providing them with the skills, knowledge, and habits they need to gain entry to higher education and succeed in college and beyond. We guarantee their academic tuition at a Florida state university for a four-year degree or at an accredited trade school. This allows them to become proud and productive citizens. The program adopts an entire class of Dreamers in an economically disadvantaged school.

Will you highlight the long-term investment and commitment of Acqualina's owners to make sure that the property continues to be an industry leader?

We have implemented a strong governance structure to guide us towards our objectives by incorporating elements for minimizing and controlling risks associated with infectious disease



Beachfront dining at the Costa Grill

Air quality is simple in concept, but it requires an enormous commitment of time, energy, skill and enthusiasm in addition to state-of-the-art, cutting-edge technology, as well as systems that are well-maintained to achieve positive and encouraging results. We have a collaborative approach and work closely with our executive committee, operating management at all levels, and front line staff to address issues of great importance for all of Acqualina's customers, residents and employees as well as our community as we plan for the future. By unleashing the incredible capacity of our team to make a difference and by opening our mind to new designs and technologies, we are making Acqualina an extraordinarily vibrant and safe place to live, to stay or to work. This is the spirit in which beliefs and values of Acqualina have evolved.

What are your priorities for Acqualina as you operate during these challenging and uncertain times?

We will continue to ensure our guests, residents and visitors have comfortable and unforgettable experiences while they are at Acqualina. We will continue to enhance our health and safety protocols at all touchpoints in our operations in accordance with local government officials, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines and will continue to make changes as necessary or appropriate to our procedures. This includes continuing temperature checks, wearing face coverings while traversing through the resort, increased cleaning and sanitization protocols using Ecolab hospital-grade peroxide multi-surface cleaner and chemicals, and physical distancing measures. We have outlined our health and safety plan that takes into account the complete guest experience.

We are committed to the highest levels of health and sanitation practices, and never hesitate to invest in resources, tools and equipment that will improve the safety and well-being of our people and overall community. Our mission is to constantly strive to do better at every level. ●



Acqualina Resort beach and pools