

## A Place Where Legends Belong

An Interview with Christopher Cowdray, Chief Executive Officer, Dorchester Collection

**EDITORS' NOTE** In 2008, Christopher Cowdray was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Dorchester Collection. His vision is to create the ultimate hotel management company, which now comprises nine hotels in Europe and the Americas as well as luxury residences in London and Dubai. He has an extensive international career managing hotels in Africa, Asia, Australia, the Middle East, and London.



Christopher Cowdray

**COMPANY BRIEF** Dorchester Collection

([dorchestercollection.com](http://dorchestercollection.com)) is a portfolio of the world's foremost luxury hotels and residences. The unique properties are all legendary in their own right, with rich heritages and worldwide reputations as places offering the most sought-after experiences of good living, charm, elegance and unparalleled standards of service. The current portfolio includes the following hotels: The Dorchester, London; 45 Park Lane, London; Coworth Park, Ascot, UK; Le Meurice, Paris; Hôtel Plaza Athénée, Paris; Hotel Principe di Savoia, Milan; Hotel Eden, Rome; The Beverly Hills Hotel, Beverly Hills; Hotel Bel-Air, Los Angeles; and The Lana, Dubai opening in 2023. Luxury residences include Mayfair Park Residences, London; The Residences, Dorchester Collection, Dubai; One at Palm Jumeirah, Dorchester Collection, Dubai; AVA at Palm Jumeirah, Dorchester Collection, Dubai and ORLA, Dorchester Collection, Dubai.

**Will you highlight the history of Dorchester Collection and how the business has evolved?**

Dorchester Collection has always been about connecting to a legendary way of life. We promise our guests a place where legends belong.

Our company is the world's leading luxury hotel management company, operating a collection of individual hotels – each with its own distinctive character. Our hotels are landmarks within their respective destinations and enriched with a deep heritage, celebrated for our place in an ever-changing world. Since our founding in 2008, we've grown to nine hotels in the world's top culture capitals including London, Ascot, Paris, Milan, Rome, and Los Angeles, and coming in 2023, The Lana in Dubai, and a hotel in Tokyo in 2028.

We've also expanded into the residential space, as our guests are increasingly looking

to bring the high level of service, discretion, and bespoke amenities that they've come to love in our hotels into their homes. We manage and service five ultra-luxury residences: Mayfair Park Residences in London, AVA at Palm Jumeirah, One at Palm Jumeirah, ORLA and The Residences in Dubai.

**What have been the keys to the strength and leadership of Dorchester Collection and how do you describe the Dorchester Collection difference?**

We stay true to our identity: we are treasured by guests, cherished by employees, and celebrated worldwide. We are the hotels where people come to experience and connect with a certain way of life.

Our anticipatory approach to hospitality offers guests exceptional service and memorable experiences in each of our iconic hotels. We've been deliberate and thoughtful in our approach which is reflected in how we've grown the portfolio, with each hotel offering a unique experience that is specific to the destination, yet familiar – with our outstanding service remaining as one of our key common threads throughout the collection.



The Promenade at The Dorchester in London

Our difference is also our people. We are a group of celebrated Michelin-starred chefs, expert concierges, thoughtful housekeepers, and pioneering executives, who are all proud to be working toward the same goal of creating unforgettable stays for guests – no matter how short or long – and creating a home-away-from-home for them in each of our destinations.

**Will you provide an overview of the properties and are there common characteristics between the properties?**

Our extraordinary guests and remarkable employees create the legendary moments that make up a significant part of who we are as a collection of hotels. In London, we have our flagship property: The Dorchester. The hotel is steeped in British history, character, and charm, and is currently undergoing an extensive renovation and restoration. While interior architect Pierre-Yves Rochon has redesigned the hotel entrance and The Promenade, Martin Brudnizki has reimagined the newly named Vesper Bar with a “roaring thirties” theme. The Promenade now features a selection of contemporary artworks by British artists paying tribute to the adjacent Hyde Park and gardens.

Across the street, we have 45 Park Lane, our Art-Deco jewel rooted in a longstanding tradition of celebrating contemporary British artists, offering guests a discreet private residence for their London stay. Also in the UK is Coworth Park, a Georgian manor style country house located on 240 acres of Berkshire parkland, with its newly and highly successful relaunched restaurant, Woven by Adam Smith.

In Paris, we have two palace hotels: Le Meurice and Hôtel Plaza Athénée – both destinations in themselves, with Le Meurice overlooking the Tuileries gardens and next to the Louvre, and Hôtel Plaza Athénée at the heart of Paris haute couture on avenue Montaigne with its acclaimed restaurant by Jean Imbert.

Next to Villa Borghese and overlooking the Ancient City of Rome is Hotel Eden, which was completely restored in 2017 and offers the ultimate in Roman hospitality. In Milan, there's Principe di Savoia where old world Italian charm and tradition meets the contemporary and modernity that Milan is known for.

Across the pond, there's The Beverly Hills Hotel and Hotel Bel-Air – both legendary



hotspots with lush tropical gardens, offering guests the absolute best in Los Angeles living.

Coming in September 2023 is The Lana, a Foster + Partners designed tower in Dubai's vibrant Burj Khalifa district, with a spectacular rooftop pool and unparalleled views over Dubai and the Arabian Gulf. This will be our first hotel in the Middle East.

I was recently in Tokyo, where we announced a new hotel within 'Tokyo Torch', the highest building in Tokyo and our first foray in Asia. Opening in 2028, this hotel will be the gateway to Tokyo and Japan, with a panoramic view of Tokyo Bay, the city center, as well as Mount Fuji.

Our hotels all serve as landmarks of their distinctive destinations. They are part of the local fabric – special places for locals and visitors alike, each offering an incredible standard of care and hospitality not found elsewhere. Our properties are where stories are written and legends made. Today, as we continue to grow our collection and the relationships within it, Dorchester Collection remains committed to our guests and to the enduring way of life they have helped us create.

**How critical is it for Dorchester Collection to build a diverse and inclusive workforce?**

We have our "We Care" philosophy, which is built on our strong commitment to diversity, inclusion and belonging to ensure all employees feel valued and respected. Part of our ongoing work is to ensure we are actively recruiting and hiring diverse talent and creating a team that is reflective of different ethnicities and cultures. We have the talented Eugenio Pirri as our chief culture and operations executive, and a large part of Eugenio's role is to continue to broaden and deepen our diversity within Dorchester Collection. We are already a group representing 67 different



*Hôtel Plaza Athénée, Paris*

nationalities and we hope we continue to expand upon that.

**What do you see as Dorchester Collection's responsibility to the communities it serves and to being a force for good in society?**

We see ourselves as an integral part of the communities in which we operate, and in each of our destinations, we work to ensure we are engaging in community empowerment initiatives and being a source of betterment and progress. Community outreach and support initiatives are key in all the destinations we

operate in and we see this as a main pillar of our responsibilities as a global industry leader.

**What has made the hospitality industry so special for you and a place where you have wanted to spend your career?**

Hospitality is so much more than an industry sector, it is an emotion and an experience. Being hospitable is to be engaging, to make others feel at home, and to leave an indelible mark on those you interact with. At Dorchester Collection, we strive for all guests and employees to feel this way, to be a part of something that makes them feel good and special, and being a part of that on a global scale is why I love this industry and why I love what I do.

**What do you see as the keys to effective leadership and how do you describe your management style?**

To be an effective leader, you must be empathetic, agile and solutions-oriented, keeping the larger vision in mind to ensure that we are all working toward the same goals. My management style is collaborative. In an industry that is always evolving and at a company that continues to grow on a global scale, I recognize how much I have to learn from those around me, and how much value my team brings to me.

**What advice do you offer to young people interested in a career in the hospitality industry?**

Working in hospitality will change your life. You will have a deeper appreciation for people, places, and the world around you. My advice is for young people to embrace the industry head on, and learn as much as you can from every facet of it. Dedicate yourself to enhancing the customer experience, and your passion and curiosity will lead you down the right path. ●



*Presidential Suite Pool at Hotel Bel-Air*