

LEISURE MANAGEMENT

ISSUE 3 2014

PRINCE HARRY

LAUNCHES THE
INVICTUS GAMES

THE
DISRUPTORS
ISSUE

CENTER PARCS'
MARTIN DALBY

"The dream has
finally come true"

VAL KEMPADOO

On a new kind of
Caribbean tourism

AMEN ISEGHOHI

Back to basics fitness

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PAYING TO NAP

YeloSpa goes global



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WTS INTERNATIONAL



Parts of the industry are ripe for disruption and a new generation of dreamers and entrepreneurs are doing just that

In this issue, we celebrate the disruptors – innovators who are coming into the leisure industry with new ideas which are innovative enough to bring about radical change in the way things are done in their sector – whether it be spa, health and fitness, sport or hospitality.

Amen Iseghohi brought lessons and inspiration from his African childhood to bear when he launched his gym chain, Amenzone Fitness, from a site in Scottsdale Arizona, US in 2008. The gym eschews many standard practices, with no weight machines, no headsets allowed, a strong social approach and the aim of working as much on members' self esteem as their bodies.

Instructors at Amenzone use a selection of different sized tyres and members' bodyweight to create a wide range of workouts – classes include 'primal fitness' and a 'yoga and rebel workout'. In a break from the silent, plugged-in gyms which are the norm, members are encouraged to talk to each other, while instructors shake hands with members after workouts and mentor them.

You can read about Iseghohi's visionary business and how he's growing it as a global brand on page 36.

The potential of the spa sector to attract the huge numbers of consumers who don't visit spas is attracting attention from investors and operators and on page 40 we talk to Nic Ronco – a Frenchman living in New York – about his growing day spa concept, YeloSpa.

Yelo sells time by the minute, has multiskilled therapists and offers sleep pods as well as treatments. Ronco piloted his concept in New York City and is now rolling it out using a franchise model.

In the resorts market, many global operators parachute Western-style operations into developing and third world countries, then charge Western prices and employ cheaper local labour to create a huge profit margin. It's a model which can be found all over the developing world.

Radical change is exciting and energising and we need it to ensure we continue to delight consumers with new and compelling offers driven by disruptive thinking

In the Caribbean, entrepreneur Val Kempadoo says this approach is "not dissimilar to that of the plantation model of yesteryear: one of maximum extraction and exploitation." He says, "It's very sad that after 500 years we're still doing pretty much the same thing."

Kempadoo has embarked on building a business on the island of St Kitts that breaks this model and sets a new direction for resort development by being owned and operated by locals. His upscale, sustainable resort – called Kittitian Hill – will open in phases through this year and next and will be aimed at wealthy New Yorkers and Londoners, as St Kitts has direct flights from both cities.

Kittitian Hill has already attracted the attention of other Caribbean governments keen to do similar projects. You can read our interview with Kempadoo on page 46.

Innovation is the lifeblood of this fast-moving, fashion-conscious industry and sharing news of disruptive thinking enables the industry to benefit from insights into the inspiration, work and passion of others. I hope you enjoy reading about these visionary disruptors.

Liz Terry, editor @elizterry

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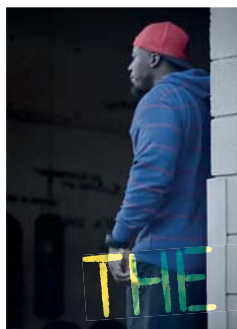
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PEOPLE



"The guys who've got to this stage and are able to take part in these events have, in my mind, already won"

HRH Prince Harry, founder and patron of Invictus Games

Prince Harry is bringing a new major sports event to the UK this year. Invictus Games will see more than 300 wounded, injured and sick servicemen and women compete across a number of paralympic-style sports in London later this year.

The first ever Invictus Games will take place from 10 to 14 September and will be fashioned after the US-based annual Warrior Games, which first took place in 2013. The vision for the Invictus Games is to harness the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider respect for those who serve their country.

"I've witnessed first-hand how the power of sport can positively impact the lives of wounded, injured and sick servicemen and women in their journey of recovery," the Prince said.

"The Invictus Games will focus on what they can achieve post-injury and celebrate their fighting spirit through an inclusive sporting competition that recognises the sacrifice they have made. I'm extremely proud that we are bringing an event like this to the UK for the first time and believe it can have a long-lasting impact on the well-being of those who've served their nations so bravely."



Prince Harry was inspired by a visit to the Warrior Games competition in the US

The Prince added that the Games would be an important part of the legacy of the 2012 Olympics, with the main venues being the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and the Lee Valley Athletics Centre.

"Invictus Games will offer the opportunity for the public to come and sit in these iconic Olympic and Paralympic venues," he said. "We want to try and get as many of these servicemen and women back into society."

The event will feature a wide range of sporting disciplines – including athletics, archery, wheelchair basketball and swimming.

Details: www.invictusgames.org

"As nerds who build games for a living we had an opportunity to rebrand what it is to be an engineer"

Brent Bushnell, CEO, Two Bit Circus

Brent Bushnell, the co-founder and chief executive of high-tech amusement company Two Bit Circus, has announced the launch date for STEAM Carnival – an entertainment showcase that re-imagines the classic midway with lasers, fire and robots.

The inaugural event will take place in Los Angeles' Crafted port-side warehouse on 25 and 26 October and will combine hands-on social games with project-based learning to inspire children to pursue science, technology, engineering, art, and maths (STEAM).

"We're out to show kids that engineering is the new rock 'n roll. We're using high tech games, project-based kits, and other fun to demonstrate what's possible with a technical background," said Bushnell.

The idea for the STEAM Carnival came after several members of the Two Bit Circus team helped make a video for Chicago rock band OK Go. The engineers built a machine for the video which pours water, rolls balls down tracks, knocks over chairs, swings sledgehammers, releases umbrellas and balloons and fires paint



Two Bit Circus co-founders Brent Bushnell (above right) and Eric Gadman (above left)

– all in time with the music.

"After the video launched we received a lot of calls from parents and teachers telling us how inspired their kids were," said Bushnell. "As nerds who build games and entertainment for a living we realised we had an opportunity to rebrand what it means to be an engineer. It's not just pencil ties and lab coats! This experience helped us realise that art has the power to bring a different audience to the engineering table. Love fashion? Introduce fashionistas to electronics to create wearable technology. Love music? Create a musical robot band!

The STEAM weekend will include live performances, interactive experiences, workshops, contests, and artisanal carnival food. There are also plans to take the carnival to San Francisco in 2015.

As part of the STEAM focus, student participants will have the opportunity to showcase projects through a variety of exhibitions including a wearable electronics fashion show and a junior arcade.

The STEAM carnival project gained momentum last June after a campaign on crowdfunding website Kickstarter raised \$102,699 through user donations to fund its development.

Support has continued to swell since and the project now counts top LA officials among its supporters.

Details: steamcarnival.com



The carnival will incorporate hands-on workshops



"This project creates a village feel where everybody feels included"

Tim and Kit Kemp, founders, Firmdale Hotels

Tim and Kit Kemp, the founders of influential boutique hotel company Firmdale Hotels, have opened their latest property in London's Soho.

The Kemps have described the project as their most ambitious to date – it involved the transformation of a neglected three quarter acre site into a new 'village' with a tree-filled garden at its centre. The hotel includes 90 bedrooms and suites, 24 apartments, 13 independent shops and a restaurant

and bar with outdoor space. It also features Firmdale's first Sohoistic Spa and gym, a 176-seat theatre, a 1950s style bowling alley, drawing room, library and a rooftop garden.

"This part of Soho has felt slightly neglected in the past," say Tim and Kit Kemp. "When you introduce a project like this into an area it can breathe new life into the environment. It enhances it and creates a village feel where everybody feels included. To walk into a tree-filled space in the centre of London is very special."

The interiors have been designed by Kit Kemp in 'modern British style' – bedrooms feature strong colours and bold prints, while the bathrooms have standalone iron baths and are done out in oak and granite. The architecture was by global design and consulting firm Woods Bagot.

The Kemps launched Firmdale Hotels in 1985. It now has eight hotels – seven in London and The Crosby Street Hotel in New York City.

Details: www.firmdalehotels.com



"Sport is one of the most effective and practical ways of planting the seeds of peace"

Tim Jahnigen and Lisa Tarver, co-founders of One World Futbol



Sting provided the funding to do the research and development for One World Futbol

It wasn't until he had reached the age of 40 that Tim Jahnigen had his 'Aha!' moment. "I was watching a news story about the plight of children in Darfur," he said.

"These acutely traumatised innocents were playing football with a ball of trash. I suddenly sat upright with the complete and unwavering understanding of the fact that these children deserved better. I not only wanted to make a ball that would enable them to play, but had a vision for a new type of ball that would play like a soccer ball, but would never go flat."

Up until his revelation, Jahnigen had been involved in a number of different sectors and business ventures – including a career as a concert producer in the music industry. "I spent many years scrubbing, digging, washing and hammering – fulfilling other people's dreams," he said, adding that it was his connections in the music world that made the ball a reality.

Jahnigen had got to know the singer Sting personally after being a part of the production family for the



artist's bi-annual Rainforest Fund Concert. Soon after coming up with the indestructible ball idea, Jahnigen – alongside wife and business partner Lisa Tarver – mentioned his vision to Sting over breakfast.

"He was telling us how he had just financed the construction of a football pitch in Gaza," Jahnigen said. "I shared my idea for an indestructible soccer ball with him and he immediately offered to cover the R&D costs."

Sting's involvement carries on in the ball's name. "When the time

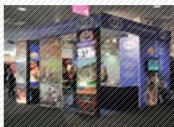
Tarver and Jahnigen (left) have worked together on the One World Futbol project (above)

came to decide what this new ball should be called, Sting simply said, 'One World', after his hit of the same name", said Jahnigen. Sting and his wife Trudie Styler continue to support the project.

Jahnigen's wife Lisa has said the venture is a mission-driven company focused on the transformative power of play. "We sell the One World Futbol through a buy one give one model", she said. "For every ball purchased, we give a second one to an organisation using play and sport to teach health awareness, conflict resolution, gender equality and life skills."

"In addition, we partner with corporations, such as our founding sponsor Chevrolet, which has pledged to donate 1.5m balls over three years." ●

Details: www.oneworldfutbol.com



Leisure – a vital part of today's shopping mall

Q&A with Nathalie Depetro, director of Mapic



Why are leisure and entertainment so important for retail areas today?

With online sales booming, traditional retail – whether in city centres or shopping centres – has adapted its offering and its marketing approach. The challenge now for those involved in real estate business such as Triple Five, Regions Group, Sonae Sierra, Wanda Group and Apsys, to name a few, is to redefine the idea of the shopping centre, and provide an enhanced customer experience. Customers will still visit shopping centres with the goal of purchasing, but they will also come to spend a day of fun, fellowship and leisure with family and friends. The shopping centre is a one stop shop for today's customers.

How does MAPIC showcase Retailtainment & Edutainment over three days?

Firstly, MAPIC focuses on retail real estate on a global scale. It's the only event where all types of development

sites are represented: shopping centres, city centres, outlying areas, transit zones, factory outlets and leisure centres. This is a unique opportunity for leisure operators and leisure brands to meet with their peers and exchange best practices with international players and owners of different retail site types.

How will entertainment and leisure integrate in shopping centres?

In the previous century, culture, leisure and entertainment played a nominal role in the shopping centre strategy, and were perceived in some ways as merely philanthropic or charitable in nature. But in the wake of online competition, many savvy developers and shopping centre operators now perceive a major opportunity to increase footfall by rebranding the shopping centre as an event-space that encourages the public to stay longer (and buy more) while visiting the mall. Events can be focused on culture, leisure or education. ●

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In 2014, a dedicated RETAILTAINMENT zone will gather key players from the sector. Strategically located in Riviera 7, this unique area will feature pitching sessions and a café to network and do business in.



retailtainment

Golden Door spa buys land for food venture

The grounds of the Golden Door wellness resort in California have increased from 377 acres to 600 as it bids to cultivate produce and become a respected food brand.

The spa's COO, Kathy Van Ness, told *Leisure Management* 100 per cent of profits from the spa's hospitality operation and food sales will go to charity as the company puts a greater focus on philanthropy.

The spa's land expert, Jeff Dawson, has brought in 30 chickens to lay fresh eggs each morning and a new computer-controlled greenhouse for growing leafy vegetables. Van Ness said the plan is also to produce branded olive oil and wine.

Read more: <http://lei.sr7a=g4z7Y>



The attraction will open in mid July

July opening for Universal Japan's Harry Potter world

Universal Studios Japan has announced a 15 July opening for its \$500m (£362m, £297m) Wizarding World of Harry Potter attraction.

The theme park hopes to build on the 10.5 million visitors it received in fiscal 2013, an improvement of 7.7 per cent from the previous year and the second-highest figure since its first year in fiscal 2001.

The new attraction is similar to the one that opened at Universal Orlando Resort in 2010, and is expected to feature rides, immersive environments and outlets based on the ever-popular Harry Potter books and films.

Read more: <http://lei.sr7a=b6e6q>



Beckham's new Major League Soccer franchise hoped to build on the Miami waterfront

Beckham's waterfront stadium plans rejected

David Beckham's plans for a football stadium on the Miami waterfront have been rejected after the US city deemed the proposed location "inappropriate," leaving the former footballer's Major League Soccer (MLS) franchise plan in tatters.

Plans were afoot to build a US\$200m (£145m, £120m), 25,000-seat football stadium for Beckham's new MLS franchise, but proposed plans fell through after the city vetoed the construction of a stadium at a prime waterfront site.

The rejection is the second in the space of a month for the former England football captain, who had plans rejected

for a similar proposal at the port of Miami, which collapsed in the face of public opposition.

Mayor Tomás Regalado, previously a strong supporter of the project, said he had changed his mind about the waterfront site and considered it inappropriate for a football stadium after seeking the opinions of local residents, leaving Beckham's investment group to consider the options available to it.

Beckham is said not to be interested in an inland option, leaving Miami with no remaining waterfront options available.

Read more: <http://lei.sr7a=V3n5V>

Les Mills CEO responds to 'McDonalds of fitness' barb



Phillip Mills has defended his company

Phillip Mills, CEO of fitness giant Les Mills, has rejected criticism that his company's standardised classes have caused the 'McDonaldisation' of the fitness industry, suggesting the critics misunderstand the purpose of the classes.

A study by two academics in Sweden decried the standardisation of the fitness industry, saying it had become uniform in the same way as fast-food chains and suggested this model places limits on a fitness instructor's competence and creativity.

Read more: <http://lei.sr7a=k2w3a>

Northern Italy's Bologna earmarked to be home of 'foodie theme park'

Italian city Bologna is set to become home to a US\$55m (£40m, £33.4m) 'foodie theme park' which is intended to celebrate the finest facets of Italian cuisine.

The joint venture between Italian food-emporium chain Eataly – which boasts 26 stores worldwide, including a New York City megastore co-owned by renowned gastronomist Mario Batali – and the Municipality of Bologna is expected to be served up in November 2015 and will cover 86,000sq ft (7,900sq m).

The land, which currently houses several abandoned warehouses, has been provided by the city-controlled Centro Agro Alimentare. It is to be transformed into Fico Eataly World – a theme park featuring restaurants, grocery stores, food labs, an aquarium and other food-themed features.



Bologna – best known for its terracotta rooftops – will soon host a 'Disneyland for foodies'

Speaking to an Italian news service, Eataly founder Oscar Farinetti expressed his excitement and announced his ambition to lure over 10 million visitors a year to his attraction, inviting them to "play

with this magical thing: Italian food."

Tourism is a major strength for Italy; more than 46 million visitors spent US\$32.1bn (£23.3m, £19.3m) in 2012.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=u6Y7T>

Palazzo Versace Dubai delayed by further 12 months

The Dubai resort development Palazzo Versace has had its opening date pushed back by another 12 months, having originally been expected to launch in 2010.

Developer Enshaa Services Group has confirmed the AED2.3bn (£405m, £475m, US\$626m) Versace-branded resort will not open until the second half of 2014 – although it was previously expected to be ready by the end of 2013 after missing its original deadline – despite having been declared "80 per cent complete" in 2010.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=P2h2D>



The resort includes a Versace boutique



Original masterplan for Rio 2016

IOC chief: Rio 2016 preparations 'worst ever'

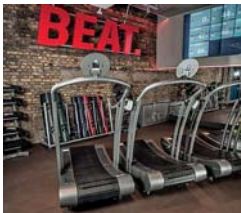
Preparations for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games are the "worst ever seen", according to the vice president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) John Coates.

Coates, who has been involved with the Olympic movement for 40 years, said the IOC was taking the issue seriously and has already acted by placing experts in the Brazilian organising committee to ensure the Games can go ahead.

Speaking at a forum in Australia, he added that progress on the Games infrastructure and venues with two years to go was even worse than the Athens Games in 2004.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=H4q7C>

Fitness industry 'must take heed' of microgym success



Microgyms like Fitness First's BEAT are on trend

Leading figures from the health and fitness industry have today warned that companies must adapt to the changing market exemplified by the surge of microgyms to avoid being left behind.

At the UK 2014 active-net conference, Les Mills' Martin Franklin said microgyms had proved a "disruptive influence" to the traditional gym model, indicating a market shift.

"We need to analyse, pick up on trends and work out ways to integrate these into our existing operations," he added.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=4A3C5>

Hovering platform offers vertiginous Rockies vista

Jasper National Park in the Canadian Rockies has unveiled its latest attraction – a suspended glass platform hovering high above the famous Columbia Glacier.

The CA\$21m (US\$19.2m, £11.4m, £14m) Glacier Skywalk is made up of a combination of structural steel and glass with the Skywalk anchored into the rock on the side of the mountain.

Visitors can travel to and from the Skywalk from the Park's Glacier Discovery Centre, where they will see six interactive interpretive stations. There is also an audio tour along a 350m (1,148ft) walkway leading up to the actual skywalk, which reaches up to 280m (918ft) above the ground.

Read more: <http://leisure7a=N6Q7f>



PHOTO: STUDIO OCTOPI & PICTURE PLANE

Swimming spaces are part of the plan

Architects look to London's Thames for wellness space

Wellness space is at a premium in modern day cities and Studio Octopi, a London-based architecture firm, is diving head first into making more of that by using London's Thames as an area for new development.

The London As It Could Be Now competition, run by the Royal Academy of Arts, asked multidisciplinary design teams to envisage new ideas for sites along the Thames.

Studio Octopi suggested creating pools at Blackfriars Bridge and the King Edward Park in Shadwell, with plans for two fixed pools, extending to a height just below the high water mark and rising with the tide.

Read more: <http://leisure7a=E9s8a>



An artist's impression of how the third tier will look at the home of the English league champions

Man City pushes forward Etihad stadium expansion

Manchester City Football Club (MCFC) has appointed constructors Laing O'Rourke to build the expansion of its Etihad Stadium.

The extension works, designed by architects Populous, are expected to cost £50m and will be undertaken in two phases.

The work will result in the venue having a capacity of 60,000 (up from the current 48,000) – making it the second largest in the English Premier League behind Old Trafford (capacity 75,811), home to local rivals Manchester United.

The first phase of construction, which will be completed in time for the 2015-16 season, will see the South Stand expanded

by around 6,000 seats. The second phase, development of the North Stand, will then complete the transformation. Ground engineering work has already begun.

Tom Glick, chief commercial officer for MCFC, said: "The expansion of the stadium is a hugely significant moment for us.

"The waiting list for the expanded Etihad is already close to capacity and we look forward to seeing a sell-out 54,000 seat stadium as we open the 2015 season."

The stadium, previously called City of Manchester Stadium, was built by O'Rourke for the 2002 Commonwealth Games.

Read more: <http://leisure7a=E2B9x>

Donald Trump buys Scotland's Turnberry golf course resort



Trump's UK courses have enjoyed mixed fortunes

Donald Trump has made his latest foray into the golf resort market with the purchase of Turnberry in South Ayrshire, Scotland.

The US property tycoon has acquired the entire Turnberry estate – including its five star hotel boasting 145 guestrooms, four ocean-view suites, an ESPA spa and three golf courses. The sum Trump paid remains undisclosed, but is thought to be much less than the £52m (US\$88m, £63m) previous owner Leisurecorp paid for the property in 2008, pre-recession.

Read more: <http://leisure7a=T2W2g>

Tom Daley Diving Academy set to launch in London

Olympic medallist Tom Daley has teamed up with leisure centre and pool operator GLL as part of efforts to create a lasting diving legacy from the London Olympics.

The Tom Daley Diving Academy will look to attract both adults and children to take up the sport. The Academy will begin operation at the GLL-managed London Aquatics Centre – where Daley trains as part of his British Diving High Performance Programme – before being introduced at other GLL managed UK facilities.

The academy will be available in three types of facilities – fundamental centres, delivering beginner courses for children to learn the fundamentals of the sport; Learn to Dive development centres, to deliver beginner and improver classes for children and adults; and academy centres,



The Olympic medallist has endorsed the academy saying it's open to anyone interested in diving

delivering all levels of the programme.

The grass roots venture is being endorsed and represented by Daley and supported by a series of world class coaches working across London.

Daley said: "The academy is giving everyone the chance to learn to dive. It's about getting people to try the sport, whether they want to dive for fun or competitively.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=S9p2n>

Roman Colosseum inspires new AS Roma stadium

Plans have been revealed for Italian premier league football club AS Roma's new 52,000-seat stadium, inspired by the legendary colosseum of ancient Rome.

The proposed structure, designed by London-based Woods Bagot, will allow Roma to move out of its current 72,000-capacity stadium, which is also home to the club's bitter rivals Lazio.

To be located on the riverside at Tor di Valle, the site will feature a hydraulic lift – similar to that of the original Colosseum.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=b2e8G>



The stadium could also accommodate concerts



The project has hit a setback

US town puts brakes on BMX 'epicentre' facility

Gilbert, Arizona could still become home to the 'epicentre' of BMX riding in the US, if plans by the country's national body go through and a timeline can be set on development by the town's authority.

USA BMX is searching for a host city to build the sports facility and attraction, which would include a purpose-built headquarters building, relocation of the BMX Hall of Fame (currently in Chula Vista, California), athlete training facilities and an indoor track with starting hills.

A statement issued by Gilbert said parks and recreation would be prioritised over the BMX super facility.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=F8k6Z>

Gibraltar Stadium plans halted amid local opposition



The project is hoped to start by the end of 2014

The Gibraltar Football Association (GFA) has been ordered by the Development and Planning Commission (DPC) to cease unauthorised work being carried out on the proposed Europa Point stadium.

The order came last month when it was discovered works including drilling had been undertaken without the correct permissions, against a backdrop of strong local opposition. The DPC also asked the GFA to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and report back.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=s4w3N>

New app offers remote tour of Holocaust museum

A US company has unveiled an interactive multimedia website which provides a virtual tour of the Riga Ghetto and Latvian Holocaust Museum from anywhere in the world.

An interactive map experience, called Walk Among Memories, combines Google Street View with archival photographs and multimedia survivor stories to allow people to tour and learn about the Riga Ghetto – a Nazi-designated area of Latvia where Jews were forced to live during the Second World War. The website – which also includes six survivor stories told as interactive graphic novels – aims to show the everyday reality of the Riga Ghetto.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=T3W7a>



The stadium will embrace innovation

Amsterdam ArenaA signs tech innovation deal

The Amsterdam ArenaA, home to Dutch football club Ajax, has signed a deal with the Municipality of Amsterdam in order to help secure the stadium's position as an innovative and progressive sporting venue.

The agreement will see the two parties progress the use of smart technological applications, allowing for the developed use of tablets and smart-phones in the stadium.

In the coming years the stadium will innovate the use of energy grids, improved connectivity and the use of applications for visitors attending the venue and serve as a testing ground for new ideas.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=G5v8A>



The San Francisco lab features a fitness centre for testing and tweaking new apps

Nike tech lab boosts wearable tech software expansion

Nike has signalled ambitions to dominate the wearable tech and fitness app market with the launch of a research and development lab in San Francisco, California.

The Nike+ Fuel Lab launched earlier this month marks the latest development in the company's quest to make its NikeFuel measurement system – whereby users earn NikeFuel points for their levels of activity – the universal standard for activity tracking across digital platforms.

Nike's range of fitness apps fall under the Nike+ network – which is currently used by 28 million people worldwide – and the company hopes to build on partner-

ships it has established with popular third-party options including weight loss app MyFitnessPal, running companion RunKeeper, and tracking app Strava to take this figure past the 100 million mark.

The company says it is cumbersome to try and compare fitness performances across myriad measurement systems with NikeFuel as its solution. At the San Francisco lab, which also features a fitness centre for testing and tweaking new apps, third party fitness companies can work alongside Nike to integrate NikeFuel into their existing products.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=m2C6E>

Fitness brand takes to Snapchat to capture 'millennials'



Snapchat is installed on 60m phones worldwide

Antipodean training provider the Australian Institute of Fitness (AIF) has become one of the first fitness brands to utilise the photo-messaging app Snapchat.

Increasingly popular among 13-24 year olds, the app presents a strong opportunity for fitness companies to tap into the difficult-to-reach millennials market, also known as 'Generation Y'. The app enables users to send pictures to their friends which display for a short period of time – typically 10 seconds – before deleting.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=U3T6T>

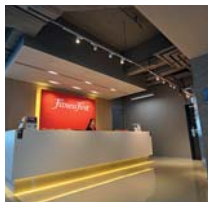
Inactivity a greater heart risk than smoking: study

Physical inactivity poses a greater risk of heart disease in women over 30 than obesity, high blood pressure or smoking, a study has found.

Researchers from the University of Queensland found that inactivity remains the greatest population risk factor for heart disease among women all the way into their 80s.

Although smoking was the most serious risk factor for women aged 22 to 27, data showed that these risks drop off as women reached 30, with physical inactivity becoming the biggest cause of heart problems. The study concluded that many lives could be saved if exercise guidelines were followed.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=b7n8h>



Southeast Asia remains a key target

Fitness First expansion planned for Asia market

Fitness First has announced it will invest more than US\$140m (£101m, £83m) over the next five years as it bids to grow its footprint in Asia by around 60 per cent.

At present, there are 88 Fitness First Asia clubs – spread across Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand – and the chain intends to open a further 50 fitness clubs in the region by 2018, expected to cost US\$100m (£72m, £59m).

A further US\$42m (£30m, £25m) will be invested in upgrading existing Asia facilities, in line with the company's global brand makeover.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=b5X2Z>



Virgin Active was founded by Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Group in 1999

Virgin Active reportedly poised for £1bn flotation

Virgin Active is lining up a potential £1bn-plus float or sale, with the company close to appointing advisers on the process, according to several UK press reports.

The health club giant recently announced a 10 per cent increase in underlying profits – it was also recently named Europe's leading health club chain in terms of revenue – and is reportedly eager to cash in on its strong position.

Virgin Active is believed to have hired City IPO consultancy firm STJ Advisors to sound out interest from investment banks, according to *The Times*. It added that a primary listing would probably be sought in

London, with a secondary listing in South Africa, where Virgin Active has 100 clubs.

The company is owned by Richard Branson's Virgin Group and CVC Capital Partners – the private equity firm which owned a large stake in Merlin Entertainments when it successfully floated in November. Virgin Active has been open about its IPO ambitions in the past and has come close to going public several times. However, press reports claim that the gym chain – which has 270 clubs worldwide – also remains open to a secondary private equity buyout.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=A3M3q>

Could wearable tech solve childhood inactivity crisis?



The tracker is intended for kids aged 4 to 7

US-based company LeapFrog has unveiled one of the first wearable activity trackers designed to promote exercise to children.

The LeapBand encourages active play and healthy habits with the incentive of earning points to nurture a 'tamagotchi-like' personalised virtual pet.

The activity tracker features 50 different activities and challenges and, as the child earns points through active play, they can unlock additional games, challenges and virtual rewards for their on-screen pet.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=A9s3h>

ATTRACTIONS



Chimelong Ocean Kingdom has set five records, including the largest underwater viewing dome

World's largest aquarium makes waves in China

A new US\$806.5m (£587m, £486m) aquatic theme park in China has broken five Guinness World Records on opening and is now officially recognised as the largest aquarium on the planet.

Chimelong Ocean Kingdom is the brainchild of PGAV Destinations, which served as the attraction's lead strategist, planner, designer, and product developer. It is the company's first full theme park design in Asia, although PGAV has previously designed Hong Kong's Grand Aquarium and a museum attraction in Xi'an, China.

The park was constructed over a three-year period, and is part of Chimelong

Hengqin Bay Hotel, the largest ocean ecological-themed hotel in China. Both the park and the hotel are owned by the Chimelong Group, which has invested more than US\$3.3bn (£2.4bn, £1.99bn).

As well as the largest aquarium accolade, Chimelong Ocean Kingdom has set records for having the world's biggest underwater viewing dome, aquarium window, acrylic panel, and aquarium tank, which contains 22.7m litres of water. There are seven themed areas inside the park, each representing a part of the ocean, plus rides, thousands of animals and a 5D cinema.

[Read more: http://lei.sr?a=y5r2r](http://lei.sr?a=y5r2r)

National Corvette Museum capitalises on huge sinkhole



The sinkhole has become a major attraction

A sinkhole which was initially a major catastrophe for Kentucky's National Corvette Museum has turned out to be a blessing in disguise as the sinkhole – which swallowed eight cars – has become a popular tourist attraction.

In February, the US museum gained global attention when the sinkhole opened up, swallowing eight classic Corvettes into the earth. All of the vehicles have now been recovered from the 40-foot (12 metre) wide by 30-foot (9m) deep chasm.

[Read more: http://lei.sr?a=T4p4c](http://lei.sr?a=T4p4c)

Puy du Fou-style theme park for Auckland Castle

French theme park Puy du Fou has announced it will partner with Auckland Castle in the UK to create its first international location.

The historical re-enactment park – which is located in the Vendée region of Western France – has signed a deal with the Eleven Arches Trust to create a visitor attraction in County Durham.

The project is the brainchild of entrepreneur Jonathan Ruffer, who bought Auckland Castle in 2012 and handed it to Auckland Castle Trust to transform into a world-class tourist destination as part of a £50m (\$84m, £61m) investment. The theme park will open in 2020.

[Read more: http://lei.sr?a=U2h3Z](http://lei.sr?a=U2h3Z)



Lionel Messi after winning in 2011

Step into Messi's boots at pop-up soccer museum

A temporary Champions League museum and gallery has opened in Lisbon in the run-up to the final of the prestigious football tournament being held in the city.

The UEFA Champions Gallery showcases 150 iconic photos, while the UEFA Champions Museum houses a range of memorabilia – including match programmes from every previous final, the right boot and shirt Barcelona's Lionel Messi wore during the 2009 final and Eusébio's jersey from 1963. The gallery is located at Paços do Concelho in Lisbon City Hall and the museum in Sala do Risco in Pátio

[Read more: http://lei.sr?a=a5k8d](http://lei.sr?a=a5k8d)

Middle East and Africa primed for wellness tourism surge, says study

Although the smallest global wellness travel market, the Middle East/African region will lead the industry charge as the largest driver of growth until 2017, according to newly-released data from the Global Wellness Tourism Congress (GWTC).

The research, undertaken by SRI International for the GWTC, was released at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) event in Dubai. It offers separate analysis of the Middle East/North African and Sub-Saharan African regions, finding that the former ranks first in the world for tourism growth (16.2 per cent annually) with market expansion from US\$5.3bn (£3.8bn, £3.1bn) in 2012 to US\$16.6bn (£11.9bn, £9.8bn) in 2017. The Sub-Saharan African wellness tourism market is forecast to grow by 12.6 per cent annually,



High end spa and hotel resorts like Atlantis The Palm in Dubai are driving wellness tourism

from US\$2bn (1.4bn, £1.2bn) in 2012 to US\$5.1bn (3.7bn, £3bn) by 2017. This will be driven by South Africa, whose well-established spa and wellness destinations and travel sector make it the pan-regional leader

in terms of trips and expenditures. The Middle East/North African surge will be led by UAE, which is expected to add one million wellness trips from 2012 to 2017.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=V8N9f>

Andrew Gibson excited by new brief as spa vp at FRHI

The new vice president of spa and wellness at Fairmont Raffles Hotels International (FRHI), Andrew Gibson – formerly group director of spa at Mandarin Oriental – has revealed spa development strategies for the private company's three chains – Fairmont, Raffles and Swissôtel.

Gibson told *Leisure Management* that FRHI will allow him to "play with some ideas that Mandarin Oriental might not have been so receptive to because it already had a very good tried and tested formula."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=y2G9Z>



Gibson's new role is "much more strategic"



The move to plus size 'reflects demand'

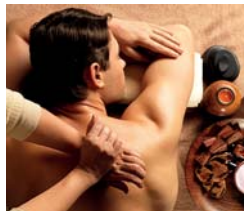
Spa bookings agency adds 'plus size' category

UK spa bookings agency spaseek-ers.com has introduced a 'plus size' spa category to its website to help visitors identify the nation's size-friendly wellness facilities.

The agency – which represents over 500 spas across the UK – has received an increasing number of customers requesting larger bath robes, bigger towels and wider treatment couches. Some of these spas offer spacious individual changing rooms, larger shower cubicles and wider dining chairs without arm rests. The 'plus size' category is designed to help consumers find spas for all shapes and sizes.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=H7M6r>

Dubai spa owner jailed for trying to bribe inspector



The women-only spa offered massages to men

A businesswoman has been jailed for six months for offering a bribe to an inspector to stop him reporting that she was still offering massages to men at her women-only spa in the Persian Gulf – despite previously receiving a ban for doing so.

On 5 May the 46-year-old Chinese businesswoman, referred to as J.W., was fined AED2,000 (US\$545, £394 £322) by the Dubai Court of First Instance and was advised that she will be deported back to China after serving her prison sentence.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=b2Y4B>

Ritz-Carlton to operate Mumbai development

Mumbai-based company Oberoi Realty has announced The Ritz-Carlton Hotel company as its hospitality partner for the 2.1 million sq ft (0.2m sq m) mixed-use World Development in Mumbai.

The two high-rise towers are being developed by Oasis Realty – a joint venture between Oberoi and Sahana Group. The project will include a 140-apartment tower and a mixed-use tower comprising commercial office space and the 280-key Ritz-Carlton hotel – which will feature an ocean-view bar, spa and banquet spaces. Ritz-Carlton will manage the hotel and apartments – both expected to open late 2016.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=f4m5z>



Moevenpick wants to 'harmonise' plans

Moevenpick Hotels seeks Africa expansion strategy

Moevenpick Hotels plans to create a spa management structure for its North African and Tunisian forays, according to Moevenpick Gammarth Tunis spa manager Jihen Derbel.

"We are hoping to create a spa concept which harmonises the high standards and efficient procedures we employ in our facilities," said Derbel. "Expansion opportunities in Africa are increasing and we need better infrastructure. Our customers are experiencing other kinds of spas so we want to make sure we are offering something unique across our portfolio of individual spas," Derbel continued.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=N2F4b>



The Harmon Hotel at the Las Vegas CityCentre will be slowly dismantled over the next year

Demolition approved for unopened Vegas Harmon Hotel

Foster + Partners' unfinished Harmon Hotel on the Las Vegas strip is set to be demolished without even opening its doors.

On 22 April, MGM Resorts International received approval to tear down Foster + Partners' failing structure owing to reinforcing steel not being correctly installed on 15 floors of the 47 story building.

The building was intended to provide 207 luxury residences and 400 hotel bedrooms, as well as a spa and several restaurants. It was also part of the 27-hectare CityCentre development by MGM, which also features an ARIA Resort and Casino, Vdara Hotel and Spa, and

Mandarin Oriental Las Vegas, as well as a luxury shopping destination.

The construction gaffe has cost US\$279m (E203m, £165m) plus another US\$11.5m (E8.3m, £6.8m) to dismantle.

In a statement, Gordon Absher, a spokesperson for MGM said: "CityCentre consulted with experts about the fastest and safest way to resolve public safety concerns created by the structural defect issues at the Harmon." Unlike the spectacles of old Vegas hotels being blown up with explosives, the demolition will see the building coming down floor by floor.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=g8W9e>

Shard 'Mirror effect' offers guests an unexpected vista



The Shard was already renowned for its views

Guests at the newly-opened Shangri-La Hotel in London's The Shard are being warned to close the blinds at night as the glass structure's panels make it sometimes possible to see into other rooms.

Some of the glass acts as an inadvertent mirror when lights are on, so the advice is being issued to maintain guests' privacy. Darren Gearing, general manager, said: "In some rooms guests may be able to glimpse into a neighbour's room, so blinds are available for guest privacy."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=f5E3S>

UK music heritage could be worth extra £4bn in tourism revenues: study

Cashing in on the tourism possibilities provided by music stars like David Bowie, The Beatles and the Arctic Monkeys could raise an additional £4bn (£6.7bn, £5bn) for the UK economy, according to a new report.

IMAGINE, a study by industry lobby group UK Music, claims that if UK cities could replicate Liverpool's success in harnessing The Beatles brand with attractions dedicated to their own homegrown stars, the potential for inbound tourism from across the world would be enormous.

Liverpool has been a standard bearer with popular attractions like The Beatles Story and The Beatles Magical Mystery Tour. Each year The Beatles and their music heritage generate £70m (£6.7bn, £5bn) for Liverpool's local economy.

The report cites the example of Hull –



The Fab Four sparked Beatlemania when they hit the US in 1964, and still remain popular worldwide

which will soon follow Liverpool's lead in becoming the City of Culture in 2017 – where the city's Museum of Club Culture hosted a temporary exhibition celebrating David Bowie's alter ego Ziggy Stardust.

Ziggy's backing band – the Spiders from Mars – were from Hull and the resulting attraction drew 30,000 visitors to the City, all of whom added to the local economy. [Read more: http://lei.sr?a=r9y7E](http://lei.sr?a=r9y7E)

Singapore tourism video goes viral for wrong reasons

Singapore's tourism body has removed a promotional video targeting Filipino tourists after the advert went viral, gaining critical panning from its online viewers.

The three-minute clip shows a Filipino couple taking in the sights of Singapore, before at the end of the clip the woman hands the man a pregnancy test kit to which the man says that "Singapore always has a surprise waiting for me."

Online commenters have labelled the video "cheesy" and "poorly-produced."

[Read more: http://lei.sr?a=j3F9X](http://lei.sr?a=j3F9X)



The video's poor dubbing attracted online derision

World's first wellness travel awards announced for 2014



The awards will look at spas across the globe

Spafinder Wellness 365 has announced the first ever awards programme totally dedicated to spas, hotels, resorts and retreats offering wellness experiences.

The annual Wellness Travel Awards will be given to top properties worldwide in numerous special categories, such as "Best for Getting Fit" and "Best New Wellness Travel Property." Wellness tourism has been identified as a growing trend and already represents one in every seven tourism dollars spent worldwide.

[Read more: http://lei.sr?a=q5T2n](http://lei.sr?a=q5T2n)



London's sights helped lure in tourists

London pips Paris to be world's top destination

London has beaten off Paris to claim the title of most popular city with foreign tourists in the world, with the latest figures showing that a stellar performance in 2013 propelled it to the number one spot.

According to data released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the UK's capital attracted 16.8 million visitors in 2013, with combined spending topping £11.2bn (\$18.8bn, £13.7bn). The amount spent by overseas visitors to London has almost doubled in the past decade, driven by significant growth in the booming Asian, South American and Middle Eastern inbound tourism markets.

[Read more: http://lei.sr?a=U4b5a](http://lei.sr?a=U4b5a)

DESIGN NEWS

A sunken park in the desert, a legendary lido and the latest offering from Ace Hotels



PHOTOS: © MARTIN SCHUBERT

• The 1,300-seat concert hall is at the core of the U-shaped building, which features three further performance spaces

House of Music opens in Denmark

After four years of construction, the House of Music, in Aalborg, Denmark, was opened this spring by the Danish Queen, Margrethe II.

The centre, which was designed by Viennese architectural practice Coop Himmelb(l)au, is a combined concert hall and school. It features a 1,300 seat concert hall with rehearsal and training rooms arranged around it and a five storey-high foyer which acts as a meeting place for students, teachers and visitors. Three more performance rooms are situated

Project: House of Music

Design: Coop Himmelb(l)au

Location: Aalborg, Denmark

under the foyer: the classic hall, the rhythmic hall and the intimate hall.

The flowing lines inside the building contrast with the strict, cube shape of the outer structure. The acoustic concept was developed with Arup's Tateo Nakajima, with the seats arranged so that visitors get the best possible acoustics at all times.



• The building's exterior is boxy, in contrast with the curved, fluid interiors

● Theatre architect Howard Crane originally designed the United Artists building, which opened in December 1927

Project: Ace Hotel Downtown Los Angeles

Design: Atelier Ace & Commune Design

Location: Los Angeles, US

Ace Hotels launches in LA

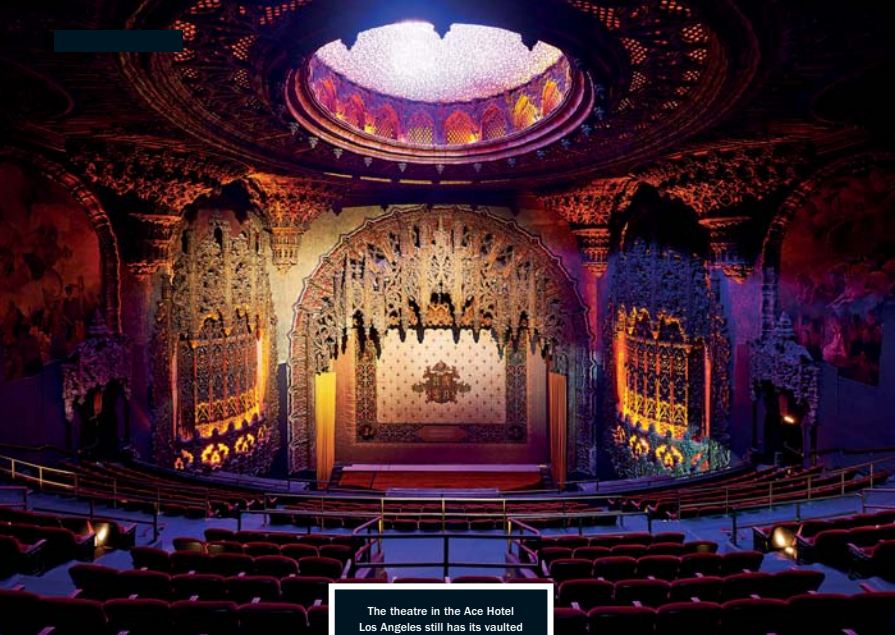
Hip boutique hotel chain Ace Hotels has launched its latest property in Los Angeles' historic United Artists building. Originally designed by architect Howard Crane for the United Artists film studio, the 18-storey building opened in 1927 and was used as a movie theatre until 1974.

Atelier Ace worked with Commune Design to restore the United Artists building and theatre. The exterior façade was stripped, cleaned and restored, 'as it would have looked in the heyday of the Broadway Theater

District'. The interiors take the Los Angeles design of the 1920s and 1930s as their inspiration, and feature 182 bedrooms, an in-house restaurant, a rooftop bar and pool and an Undefeated gym. The restored 1,600 movie theatre is available for concerts, private screenings, premieres and events.

In the movie theatre, the original murals and intricate plaster and metalwork and theatre seats were reclaimed and restored, while a new Art Deco style ticket booth was installed.



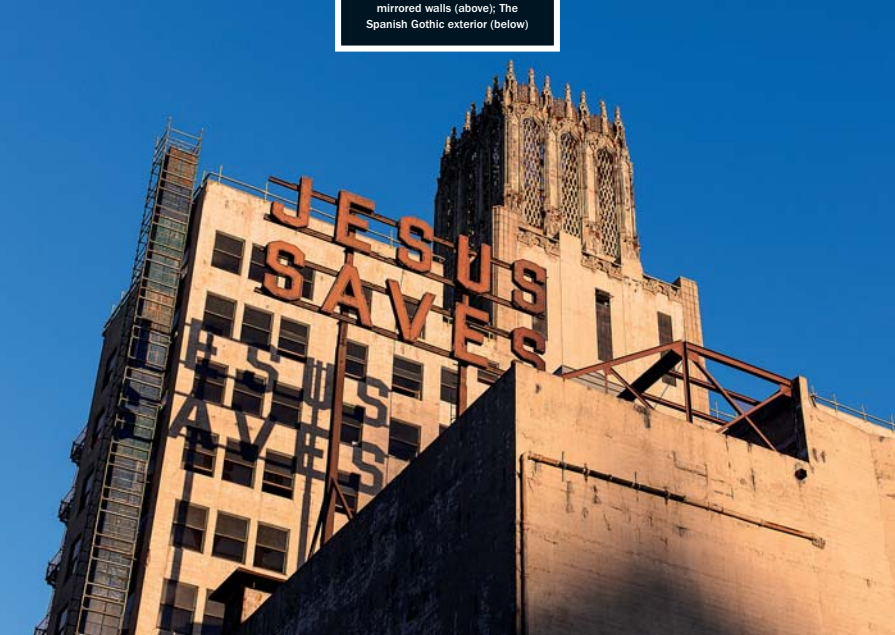


The theatre in the Ace Hotel Los Angeles still has its vaulted ceilings, intricate metal and plasterwork and painted murals





The LA Chapter brasserie features black and white tiled floors and mirrored walls (above); The Spanish Gothic exterior (below)





A shaded garden will grow beneath the 'cracked desert'

Plans revealed for Abu Dhabi Sunken Desert

Project: Al Fayah Park

Design: Heatherwick Studios

Location: Abu Dhabi

Plans have been unveiled to build a 125,000sq m (410,105sq ft) desert oasis in the shape of the Al Fayah Park in the city of Abu Dhabi.

Scheduled to open to the public in 2017 – with work starting as soon as the design stage is finished by architects Heatherwick Studios in late 2014 – the park will offer a variety of open spaces with exercise paths and picnic areas.

The park incorporates a series of column structures, designed to resemble cracked pieces of a desert surface, which provide partial shade, allowing a lush garden to grow underneath. It will also feature organic fruit and vegetable gardens, which will supply its cafés.

The Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation is the developer behind the scheme.



The hotel offers views of the Al Hajar mountains

Mountainside resort opens in Oman

The Alila Jabal Akhdar, Alila's first hotel in the Middle East, has opened in Oman. Designed by architecture firm Atkins, with interiors by P49, the resort is perched on the edge of a cliff amid dramatic mountainous scenery.

It features 78 suites and two villas, two restaurants, an outdoor and an indoor pool, a gym and the Spa Alila.

Locally sourced materials and traditional artisanal craftsmanship were used in the construction of the hotel, while the interiors blend traditional Omani elements with

Project: Alila Jabal Akhdar

Design: Atkins / P49

Location: Oman

contemporary, minimalist design. Atkins worked with geologists and structural engineers to overcome the challenges presented by the remoteness of the site, test access difficulties and the very harsh weather.



The hotel will feature extensive use of glass and concrete

Europe's first Nobu Hotel to open in London

Nobu Hospitality – a chain famous for its Michelin-starred sushi, celebrity partners including Robert de Niro, and its glitterati clientele – is opening its first hotel in Europe.

The site, located in the Shoreditch area of London, will be built in the chain's signature 'east meets west' style. London-based Ben Adams Architects and Californian Studio PCH are collaborating on the design of the project.

The hotel, currently under construction, is due to open in the first quarter of 2016. It will feature 156 rooms, a fitness centre and meeting/banqueting spaces.

Trevor Horwell, chief executive of Nobu Hospitality, noted this would be the company's first European hotel

Project: Nobu Hotel

Design: Ben Adams Architects/PCH

Location: London, UK

and that the chain is "continuing to expand its global hotel footprint with a robust development pipeline, while working with the best strategic partners."

Five stories will be stacked on top of each other with fractured beams overhanging each level, attempting to create a 'fun-luxury experience' as well as keeping the brand's cool persona at the forefront of the design.



● It is now open for hotel guests

Legendary Paris lido restored

Project: Piscine Molitor

Design: Jean-Philippe Nuel

Location: Paris, France

Paris's legendary outdoor swimming pool, Piscine Molitor, has opened within the new Molitor Paris hotel from Accor's MGallery.

Originally opened in 1928, the 50m pool was once one of the French capital's most fashionable spots; the world's first bikini was launched there, and Tarzan actor Johnny Weissmuller was once a lifeguard there.

By the 1980s, however, it had fallen into disrepair, and the pool was

closed in 1989. Over the subsequent years, the abandoned building became a magnet for ravers and graffiti artists, before a local group, SOS Molitor, began campaigning to reopen the pool.

The project was undertaken by the Bouygues construction group working in partnership with Accor, with funding from investment company Colony Capital.

Interiors are by Jean-Philippe Nuel and architecture is by Perrot and Richards. The building houses a 124 room hotel, a spa, a restaurant, gym and rooftop bar, which will be used to host a range of events. ●



Since opening in 2012, the £350m cooled conservatories at Gardens by the Bay in Singapore have won numerous awards – most recently the coveted RIBA Lubetkin Prize in September 2013 for best new international building – with judges applauding the design team for pushing the boundaries of environmental and structural design. The two giant biomes are carbon positive – no mean feat considering the amount of energy needed to keep plants cool in a sub-tropical climate like Singapore's – and explore how plants in the Mediterranean and cloud forest environments could be affected by climate change.

The project is made up of three waterfront gardens: Bay South, Bay East and Bay Central; the cooled conservatories are located in Bay South and were designed by architect Wilkinson Eyre, landscape architect Grant Associates, structural engineer Atelier One and environmental design consultant Atelier Ten.

The 12,800sq m Flower Dome is home to a collection of plants from Mediterranean regions around the world, and features lavender fields, olive groves and giant baobab trees.

The 7,300sq m Cloud Forest Dome tells the story of plants that grow in cool tropical cloud forests. It features a 'mountain' covered in lush vegetation from which a 35m waterfall drops down. Within the 'mountain', exhibition spaces explore the impact of

PAUL BAKER



Creating giant cooled conservatories in Singapore's subtropical climate in an environmentally sensible way required clever thinking, says Wilkinson Eyre's Paul Baker



■ The Cloud Forest Dome features an artificial, plant-covered mountain, which visitors can climb

incremental changes to the earth's temperature and explain the sustainable technologies used in the creation of the cooled conservatories.

Gardens by the Bay also features 18 supertrees, designed by Grant Associates, which are home to thousands of plants and feature photovoltaic cells to harvest solar energy.

The biomes have been designed to cast as little shadow as possible, while highly selective glass filters out heat from the sun. Retractable shades are used to control light levels and limit the heat gain when the sun is out.

The energy used to cool the biomes comes from an on-site biomass CHP system fired by horticultural waste. The wider development is also fitted with arrays of photovoltaic panels.

Here project architect Paul Baker discusses the project.



How did you get involved with the Gardens by the Bay project?

We'd worked with the landscape architect Andrew Grant of Grant Associates for many years on various projects, including the Alpine House at Kew Gardens (a small, cooled Alpine plant conservatory). He was contacted by the National Parks Board of Singapore and he phoned us and said, 'There's this mad competition for a fantastic park in Singapore. Do you fancy joining us?'

We teamed up with structural engineers Atelier One and environmental design consultants Atelier Ten, and put a lot of energy into the competition.

From our work on the Alpine House at Kew, we understood that the plants determine the brief and that to make a particular type of plant grow well, you need a certain range of circumstances. There's no point working on a monster visitor attraction where the plants look shrivelled up and unhappy.

What was the brief?

To design two different environments of a very significant scale; one for Mediterranean plants and one for tropical but high altitude plants.

How did the idea for the biomes develop?

We hit on the idea quite early on that we'd like to put a mountain inside the Cloud Forest Dome, because you don't get the opportunity to do that very often! We then liked the idea of creating the opposite – a kind of valley



We hit on the idea quite early on that we'd like to put a mountain inside the Cloud Forest Dome, because that's not something you do very often!

– inside the Mediterranean dome.

We quickly understood that we weren't conditioning the total volume of air inside the biomes, because that would be insane. The idea of layering the heat or cool became logical. In the Mediterranean biome, the valley shape works really well for cooling. The cool air comes around the perimeter and kind of tumbles down the valley, then sits at the lowest point. In the Cloud Forest dome, we made the mountain itself a machine to supply air – it has lots of holes in it and the air tumbles down, cooling the plants.

How did the solar supertrees come about?

They were Andrew Grant's brainchild. There was a danger that a newly planted landscape on reclaimed land would be a bit flat and wouldn't have enough draw. Andrew was keen to create some height and interest.

■ Gardens by the Bay is a key part of the government's vision to create a 'city in a garden'

We had a biomass boiler, and we knew that we didn't want to expel hot air at ground level. It became clear that a few chimneys were needed, and we realised we could dress them with the supertrees. It all fitted together.

Because Singapore is so humid, plants sit quite happily on trees and other structures, so we could have plants clinging to a frame on the supertrees. The client and Andrew were keen to demonstrate really creative horticulture; to be really out there and exciting and make it different.

We designed a bar with panoramic views in one of the highest supertrees. They took on a life of their own.

What was the aim of the Gardens by the Bay project?

The Singapore government has done a lot to promote leisure on Sentosa Island, with the introduction of big resorts and casinos. The Gardens by the Bay project was part of a plan to balance that with a more cultural story.

The idea was to build on the success of Singapore's Botanic Garden and create a new pleasure garden. The park is open and free, and gives something back to everyone in Singapore, while also maximising the value of the land around the site.

ARCHITECT FOCUS: PAUL BAKER, WILKINSON EYRE

The supertrees provide shade by day and come alive with lighting and projected media by night. Some of them feature photovoltaic cells and some act as air exhausts for the cooled conservatories





► The glasshouses are carbon neutral. How did you achieve this?

A cooled conservatory is a tough one to pull off in an environmentally sensible way, because glasshouses like to get hot and not cold. That's where having a good team was fundamental. Thinking about conditioning the places where the people and plants are, not the whole volume, was key.

We were very focused on the envelope being as efficient as possible. The biomes are bobble shaped, with minimum surface area and maximum enclosed space. They are also responsive, with fabric sails that extend across the biomes to stop heat gain when the sun is out.

Next, we needed to find an energy source. We looked at all the typical sources of cooling – water, the ground, wind and solar – but none worked. The sea is warm in Singapore, there's no shift in temperature between day and night, there are no seasons. There's no free energy sink.

Singapore has lots of rain trees that have been planted along most of the highways and roads. These are cut frequently to provide optimum shade, with the pruned branches going to landfill or being used as compost. We realised they could be a great source of energy so we decided to burn them in an on-site steam biomass boiler, which provides energy to cool the domes.

It means that we don't have to ship them from anywhere complicated; they're available on the island. It became a great story.



PHOTO: ©MAX TAN

Why was it so important to be environmentally responsible?

The thrust of our argument was that if we can do the cooling of conservatories – one of the trickiest things to do in a carbon responsible way – that's a great message for Singapore to put out there. The visitors to Gardens by the Bay are quite diverse and their awareness of climate issues is not as great as in the UK, so it seemed like a good place to start telling some

stories about climate change. We worked with Land Design on a projection in the Cloud Forest Dome called + Five Degrees, which illustrates what would happen if the temperature of the earth rose by five degrees.

Can you describe the design of the two domes?

We designed two distinct domes, differently shaped, but with a very strong synergy, directly responding to

Project In brief: Cooled Conservatories, Bay South, Singapore Gardens by the Bay

● THE BUILDING

Project value: £350m

Ground area:

The Flower Dome 12,800sq m
The Cloud Forest 7,300sq m

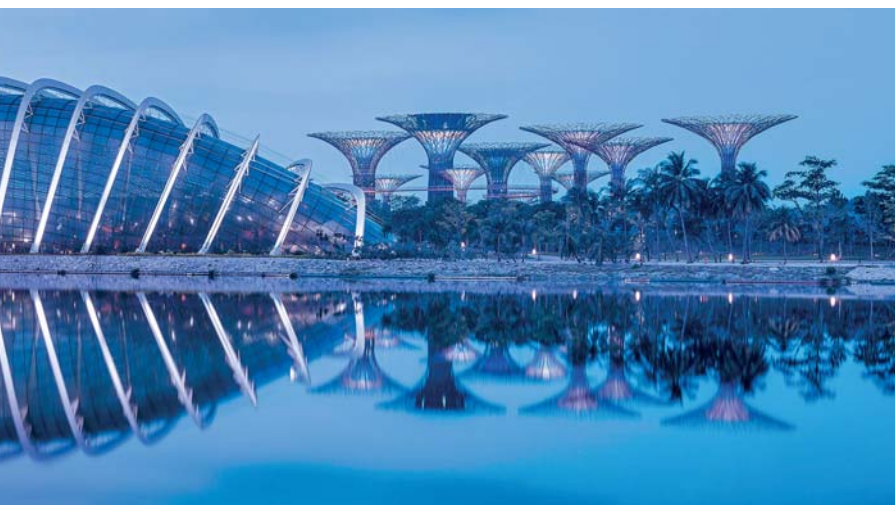
Structure: Composite structure comprised of a steel gridshell supported by a superstructure of radially arranged steel 'ribs'

Envelope: Low-e coated glazing.
Automated retractable fabric shades

Renewable energy systems: A biomass combined heat and power system fired from horticultural and other waste, with a useable thermal output of 5.8MW and electrical output of 1,000kW. In addition to these approximately 100kWp of photovoltaic panels are installed within the wider development.

● THE TEAM

Architecture: Wilkinson Eyre
Landscape architecture: Grant Associates
Environmental design consulting: Ateller Ten
Structural engineering: Ateller One
Exhibition design: Land Design Studio
Branding and signage: Thomas Matthews



“

We wanted the biomes to be elegant and beautiful and appealing in every possible way, and we wanted to design them sensibly from an environmental perspective

”

the climate within each one.

The two biomes offer very different experiences. The Mediterranean Dome is much wider, lower and softer in form than the Cloud Forest Dome. There's no prescriptive journey; you arrive high, then walk down through the space along terraces and walkways, following your own route. The Cloud Forest Dome is very different; you arrive low and your journey takes you to the top, then there's a very prescriptive route as you walk down.

They're both fun, and a good contrast to one another. The cloud forest environment is wet and cold, and quite loud because of the waterfall. The Mediterranean biome is calmer and quieter and the colours are much richer.

What were the biggest challenges of the project?

Doing it in an environmentally responsible way, but making it look effortless. We wanted it to be elegant and beautiful and appealing in every

possible way, while doing it sensibly from an environmental perspective.

What drew you to a career in architecture?

I always wanted to be an architect. I don't know where it came from, but there was never any doubt about what I wanted to do. I studied at Oxford Polytechnic (now Oxford Brookes University). My first job was during a year out, when I went to work for my tutor, John Craig, at Aldington, Craig and Collinge. John Craig was a great tutor and a powerful influence. When I left college I worked for Covent Garden Housing Project for eight years, before joining Wilkinson Eyre 24 years ago.

I became passionately interested in doing cultural projects with a message.

Where are your favourite places on earth?

I like my garden in Dorset, and I wouldn't say no to the Maldives or to the top of a mountain somewhere.

What inspires you?

I love looking at art and visiting galleries and museums – that generates ideas. I also love being outdoors and looking at plants and nature.

Are you working on any other leisure projects?

We're currently doing a refurbishment of the Wellcome Collection on Euston Road in London, which will open this September with a whole range of new floors and gallery spaces.

We're working on the Crown Sydney Hotel Resort on Sydney Harbour – a big waterfront development which will feature hotels rooms and suites, a casino, restaurants, a spa and a residential component. That's due for completion in 2019.

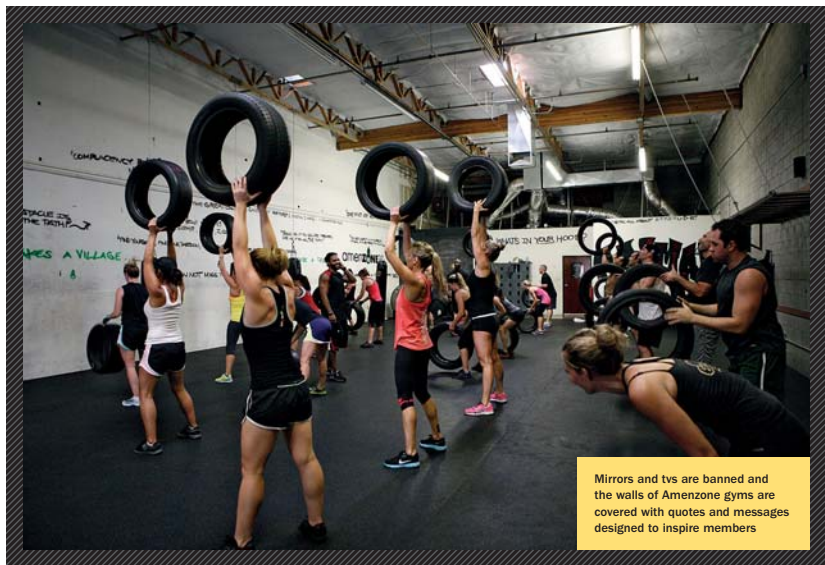
We're also working on the Carlsberg Brewhouse project – a visitor centre in a redundant brewery in Copenhagen. The starting point for that project is four giant granite elephants! That's due to open in 2017. ●

"DREAM AS IF YOU WILL LIVE FOREVER
LIVE AS IF YOU WILL DIE TODAY!"

THE DISRUPTORS

MAKING TRACKS

Inspired by his childhood in West Africa, Amen Iseghohi launched Amenzone, a chain of back-to-basics gyms that bans mirrors and uses recycled tyres to get its members fit. Magali Robathan finds out more



BB

We don't allow mirrors or tvs, and because people aren't plugged into their headphones, they communicate with each other a lot more

BB

Launched by founder Amen Iseghohi in 2008, Amenzone Fitness is based on a minimalist approach that uses nothing but tyres and members' body strength and movement to get fit. Classes include boxing, 'primal fitness,' yoga and 'rebel workout' – all using the tyres in different ways.

The first Amenzone gym opened in Scottsdale, Arizona in June 2008. Since then, Amenzone Fitness Corporate has opened two further gyms in Arizona, both in 2013. Amenzone launched its franchising business in 2012 and there are now six franchise gyms open across the US, with a further 23 franchises sold. The first Amenzone outside Arizona opened in Manhattan Beach, California in September 2013. A second California gym is due to open in Santa Monica later this summer.

How did you get the idea for Amenzone?

I was born in Belgium but raised in London. When I was eight, my parents decided they wanted me and my sister to have a deeper understanding of our heritage and a greater appreciation of what was really important in life, so they took us to live in West Africa.

At first I thought it was some kind of punishment – coming from somewhere we'd had so many privileges, waking up and eating cereal and watching cartoons, I suddenly found myself in a place with no television, no electricity – it was very primal.

My grandmother [who was a former athlete] wanted to keep us active. The compound we lived on was filled with tyres, so she used them as a way of keeping us fit, but also as a tool to teach us about life. We'd race the tyres, and when we felt like giving up she'd

say, no, you can't give up in life; you have to keep going. You need to move forward, just as a tyre turns and moves.

When I moved to America in 2003, I immediately noticed that the obesity rate was so significant. I realised it wasn't a local or city problem, it was a global epidemic. I thought about it and thought, this issue isn't so much about the lack of fitness and good nutrition. It's a disease rooted in a problem that everyone seems to be ignoring. If you don't feel good about yourself, you don't care what you do to yourself. My grandmother used fitness as a tool to motivate us, but she was always focused on our self-esteem. I thought, that's it – the reason I'm in shape is that I feel good about who I am.

I decided to build my business, and the non profit foundation that runs alongside it, on the same premise, which is that you should build self-



AMENZONE FITNESS HISTORY

JUNE 2008

Amenzone Fitness launches its first gym, in North Scottsdale, Arizona

2012

Amenzone launches its franchising efforts

MARCH 2013

Amenzone Fitness opens in Fountain Hills, Arizona

JUNE 2013

Amenzone Fitness opens in South Scottsdale, Arizona

SEPT 2013

First Amenzone Fitness opens outside of Arizona, with the launch of Amenzone Fitness Manhattan Beach, California

OCT 2013

Amenzone Fitness opens in Biltmore Fashion Park, Phoenix, Arizona

NOV 2013

Amenzone Fitness Arrowhead opens in Glendale, Arizona

DEC 2013

Amenzone Fitness DC Ranch opens in Scottsdale, Arizona

JULY 2014

Amenzone's second California gym set to open in Santa Monica

HEALTH & FITNESS

esteem first. We're using fitness as a vehicle for self empowerment.

I had corporate jobs when I first moved to the US – first for Coca Cola then for flooring company Shaw Industries. My vision for Amenzone started with one kid and one tyre in a park. I gave up my corporate job where I was making more than \$100,000 a year, and took one of the biggest risks of my life to work on this.

How do you build self-esteem through your gyms?

We don't allow mirrors in our gyms and we have inspirational quotes on the wall, so that instead of looking at themselves while they work out, our members read powerful messages.

We also don't have any TVs, and because people aren't plugged into their headphones, they communicate with each other a lot more. That's been really successful, because a lot of folks are tired of going to gyms where you don't talk to anyone, you just watch TV and run on a treadmill. It's a way of going back to basics.

At the end of each class, the trainers pass on an inspirational message to the class, then they hold open the door for the members, shake each and every one of them by hand and thank

The tyres are colour coded by weight. Instructors try to build self-esteem and connect with members

them for taking the time to be there.

It means the trainers make a personal connection with everyone and get to know them. A small thing like that can make a big difference.

At Amenzone it's about more than just fitness. It's about working from the inside out, working on the spiritual and the mental aspect as well as the physical aspect.

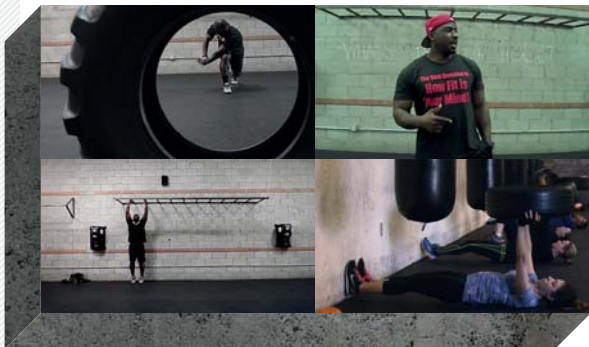
How do you use tyres in your classes?

The tyres are really just a prop – we tell people they can use anything in their environment. In my case, tyres were what I had, so that's what I used.

We have hundreds of exercises you can do with just one tyre. Once you've done our classes, you'll never see a tyre the same way again.

We do strength conditioning, upper body, lower body and core workouts. We use the tyres to help our members put on lean muscle mass. Anything you do in a regular fitness class, we'll do with tyres – we've even launched an athletic yoga programme that incorporates the tyres into the movements.

All of our tyres are recycled and colour coded by weight. The green tyres are our lightest tyres at about 10 to 12 pounds, the red tyres are our middle level tyres at about 15-20 pounds, and the black tyres are our advanced tyres – they weigh 20, 25 or even sometimes 30 pounds. They're for people who really want to take their bodies to the next level. We also have





BB

Any franchisee that comes on board has to be willing to make a difference in their community. I refuse to compromise on that

BB

tractor tyres, which we use in our work with professional athletes.

What is the Amenzone Foundation?

It's a non profit foundation with an established board. We partner with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America – which is similar to YMCA – to get our programmes into the community.

It's a free afterschool programme that's sponsored by corporates and angel investors. United Healthcare is a partner of ours; the company has rolled out our programme to several schools and Boys and Girls Clubs. They liked our concept because it's unique and it works – what kid doesn't like to play with tyres?

We use fitness as a vehicle to build self-esteem and get our message out about the importance of physical and mental self care. It's important that

we focus on self-esteem, as well as nutrition and fitness, and we monitor the progress of the young people taking part in the programme. At the start, we carry out a range of tests, and ask questions about fitness, nutrition and self-esteem. After a period of time we go through all the tests again so that we can measure the effect the programme is having.

We go into a lot of very hard-hit, economically deprived communities to show these kids another way.

What are your plans for the next 12 months?

Amenzone is such a simple, scaleable model. We've already been solicited by international groups who want to take this to Australia and the UK, but for the next year, we're going to focus on growing organically across the US via our franchise business. From a corporate

perspective, our main focus is on New York and LA which are both perfect markets for us, but we'll accommodate any other cities that fit our demographic and what we're trying to accomplish.

We've sold 10 franchises within the greater Los Angeles area – our second LA gym is due to open in Santa Monica soon. I think LA may just be our largest market.

Our first Amenzone in New York is also due to open very soon.

What's your long term vision?

We will have gyms across the globe, wherever we think we can help. For every location we have an Amenzone Fitness gym, we also want to have an Amenzone Foundation programme there. I refuse to compromise on that. Any franchisee that comes on board has to be willing to make a difference in their community. ●

THE DISRUPTORS

Nicolas Ronco

With dedicated nap pods, easy to understand treatment menus and a price per minute, YeloSpa is hoping to help stressed out city dwellers bring a bit of sanity into their lives. Founder Nicolas Ronco speaks to Magali Robathan

Tell me about your career history

I studied corporate finance at the Université Paris Dauphine in France. I then went to the University of New York to complete my MBA as part of an exchange programme. After graduating, I worked for Time Warner for 10 years as a marketing executive, before moving to France in 1999 to take up the position of general managers of several divisions of music software provider MakeMusic. In 2004, I left to start working on the YeloSpa concept.

How was the idea for YeloSpa born?

The idea was born because I was persuaded by a customer – myself! When I worked for MakeMusic, I travelled a lot. When you're under pressure and you're away from home, you want to find a space where you can recharge your batteries quickly. A spa seems like the most natural option, but in reality I found the whole spa process in the US and Europe very frustrating. You often have to book treatments a long time in advance, the quality can be hit and miss, it's very expensive and – as a man – I often felt out of place in an environment that felt quite female-orientated.

I travelled a lot to Asia and I noticed that many of the issues I was having were really well mitigated there – the access to spas was much easier, the prices were more reasonable and the consistency of service was good.

An idea popped into my head: why can't we create a brand in the US that would address the resistance people have to spas? Seventy five per cent of



Nicolas Ronco worked for Time Warner and MakeMusic before launching YeloSpa

US consumers don't go to spas. Why not? The four main objections people have to going to spas are that it's too expensive, people aren't sure how effective the treatments are, spas can be intimidating and men often feel as though it's a 'woman thing'.

How did you come up with the concept?

We started by creating a place where the offer and the booking process were very easy. We eliminated the

traditional spa menu, which can be very confusing and overwhelming, and replaced it with three categories – massage, skincare and sleep. When customers book, they just choose from those three categories, which makes it very easy to understand.

To combat the worries people have about the expense of visiting a spa, we decided to establish a price per minute. This lets people decide how much time they want to give themselves and allows them to control their budget. We charge a straight price per minute – \$2.4 per minute for a massage, \$2.5 for skincare and \$1 for sleep. People can then decide they want 30 minutes of massage and 20 minutes of nap, for example. It's super easy, and takes less than a minute to book online.

Spas can be quite inflexible – people might book a Balinese ritual a week before the treatment, but when it gets to the day they realise they actually need a deep tissue massage because they've been running and have muscle ache, but it's too late to change. At YeloSpa, all of our massage therapists are trained in all disciplines. Customers book 30 minutes of massage and 20 minutes of nap, for example. When they come in they'll sit down with a therapist who will ask how they are and what issues they want to address, and will advise on the best type of massage on the day.

Where did you get the idea to offer naps?

I grew up in Tunisia in the 1970s, when we didn't have air conditioning, so people had to take naps because it was impossible to focus during the



The colour scheme used in the spa was inspired by the robes and sashes worn by Tibetan monks



I took regular naps when I worked for Time Warner and really saw the difference in my productivity as a result. I lived close to my office but I thought, 'what about people who live further away?'

hottest part of the day. I saw my father come back from the office and take a nap, and we did the same from school. It was something that was really integrated into our lifestyles.

I continued to nap when I was working for Time Warner in New York. I escaped the office at lunchtime, went home, ate a sandwich and had a 20 minute nap. I really saw the difference in my productivity as a result of taking a nap compared to other people who didn't. Between 3pm and 5pm the people around me were falling apart, while I was alive and enjoying the meetings I was in. I was fortunate that I lived very close to the office, but I thought, what about the people who have to commute or who live further away? There's no place for people to take refuge.

It made me think there must be something in our natural circadian cycle that encourages us to nap, and when I started reading the literature I realised that really was the case. Scientific studies show that taking a nap three times a week for 20 minutes can reduce your rate of heart attack by 37 per cent. It also helps with learning and creativity. If you feel stuck and are trying to work on a problem, taking a nap is extremely efficient – you will start making mental connections during that time.

If people book in for a nap at YeloSpa, what happens?

We designed a special pod called the YeloCab, which simulates being in the womb and features chromotherapy, aromatherapy and music and sound that customers choose. Our YeloChairs elevate the legs above the heart to slow down the heart rate and decrease body temperature. This produces a relaxation response, and encourages sleep.

Customers choose how long they would like to nap for (between 20 and 40 minutes), and at the end of the nap we wake them up with a simulated sunrise. The light decreases the level of melatonin in their brain through the effect on the optical nerve and they



When customers arrive at a YeloSpa they sit down with a therapist to plan their treatments

wake up very slowly and gently.

At Yelo we offer naps for two reasons – the first is for mental and physical health. The second reason was from a spa experience standpoint. The worst time in a treatment is when the therapist comes to you at the end, gives you a glass of water, and says 'I'll be waiting outside, take your time'. You're on cloud nine and suddenly you have to come back to reality. We offer the option to take a nap at the end of treatments, which really completes the whole cycle in a very nice way.

How did you get YeloSpa off the ground?

My first instinct was to go back to my alma mater, Time Warner, set out my vision and ask them if they thought their employees would benefit from it. They were very enthusiastic and told me, 'if you build it, we'll send our employees there'. Based on that I created a business plan, then spoke to investors and started raising money. At that point, we really started working properly on the business – we found a very talented designer, Stefan

Boubil, and we also worked with someone with a PhD from Harvard to help us design our nap programme.

We opened the first YeloSpa in 2007 in midtown Manhattan, New York.

The vision has changed since the early days. The original idea was to keep the concept very simple and just offer naps and reflexology, which I thought would be cool because it would be very efficient. The problem was that a lot of people weren't familiar with reflexology and were a bit skittish about taking naps. For the first six months we had a tremendous amount of press, but not a lot of traffic. We started offering regular spa treatments such as massage and skincare, and that's when the business really took off.

How is business now?

It's really good. The location in New York, which is on 57th Street between 5th and Madison Avenue, is fantastic, and gets a lot of customers. Our customers are different during the week and on the weekend – during the week it's a lot of Type A guys taking naps and having reflexology, whereas on the weekend there are more women, and our customers want to take more time and really be pampered. The majority – about 65 per cent – of our customers are active women in their thirties. Right now naps represent eight per cent of our revenue and around 15 per cent of the treatments we do. The figure is quite low because the rest of our treatments have grown so quickly, while naps have stayed stable.

How did the business evolve?

Last year we opened our second facility, which is a franchise, in Sao Paulo in Brazil. It's a 3,000sq ft facility with 10 treatment rooms in a two storey house in a beautiful location – it's very Yelo in terms of design but also very cozy and adapted to the Brazilian market.

In May this year, we opened our third facility – another franchise – in San Juan, Puerto Rico. It's a large 5,000sq ft facility with nine treatment



The YeloSpa in Puerto Rico (above).
Ronco with Mitchel Rivera, CEO of
YeloSpa San Juan (below right)





The YeloSpa in San Juan, Puerto Rico features thermal facilities including a flotarium tank (right)

rooms, a couples' room and thermal facilities including a salt-water flotarium, a steamroom and a rainfall hallway. Together with the franchisee, we've created a new treatment called Waterology, which is very exciting. The therapists perform reflexology on your feet while you're floating in a warm pool of salt water – it's a bit like having reflexology on your mother's womb. We also launched a blow dry brand, YeloDry Blo, which has been doing very well. It's a really fun and unique place.

Each one has a different local feel, but because our brand is so strong, you immediately recognise them as being Yelo spas.

What's next?

We're working on a licensing agreement for a YeloSpa in London. It's not signed yet, but it could be exciting.

Our next big push is to expand our franchising in the US. We're looking at Florida, Chicago, San Francisco and Houston, Texas. We're currently going through the legal requirements to become a franchisor in the States. In the long term, we'd like to have around 100 – 150 locations in the US.

We're also looking at product development. We'd like to develop a range of products under the Yelo brand – aromatherapy products, apps and homeware – different pillows and mattresses and sheets made with

sustainable materials. There's going to be a big focus on sleep and wellbeing.

We're also going to open another YeloSpa in Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris some time in 2016.

You've just starting offering memberships. How does that work?

We started offering memberships in April and it's been way more successful than we thought it would be. We thought we'd be selling 300 memberships a year for our New York facility – instead we sold 100 memberships in just one month.

We're making it very easy for people to leave because that makes it easy for them to join. Our philosophy is that people will stay because they love the service we offer, not because we put in impediments for them to leave. Our membership is \$99 a month; for that you get a 60 minute treatment of either skincare or a massage, 20 per cent off an additional treatment during the same month and a 10 per cent discount on products. You can cancel your

membership at any time, you can roll over your treatments indefinitely and you can gift them to a friend or family member if you're not able to use them.

We also launched two membership offers in May – a nap membership for \$29 a month and a waxing membership for \$39 a month.

What's been the most challenging thing about launching YeloSpa?

Getting people to understand what we were was a challenge at the start. We didn't call ourselves a spa, because we didn't offer the full range of treatments, so people didn't understand what we did. Once we started calling ourselves YeloSpa people began to understand the business a lot better.

And the highlight?

The highlight has been getting customer feedback and realising that some of our customers understand my concept better than I do. Also our licensees really get it. In Puerto Rico, our licensees have pushed the



We really live insane lives. It's taking a huge toll on us, and we don't fully realise it until we have our first heart attack or get burned out. I want to introduce a measure of sanity into people's lives



concept even further, for example with the development of the waterology and the blow dry treatments. When people see and expand on your original vision that's very rewarding.

How would you describe yourself? And how would others describe you?

I'd describe myself as pretty driven. Some people describe me as a bull in a china shop because I say exactly what's on my mind – I'm not the most diplomatic person. At the same time, my vision is very pure. I've made a lot of sacrifices in my personal life and I've taken a lot of financial risks – with both mine and other people's money. You don't do that unless you have a real passion for what you're doing and a real sense of purpose.

What is the philosophy of YeloSpa?

My realisation when I worked in the corporate world is that we really live insane lives and it's taking a huge toll on us that we don't fully realise until

Therapists are trained in all massage disciplines, meaning they can tailor their treatments

we have our first heart attack or get burned out or get some nasty disease. I want to introduce a measure of sanity into people's lives.

Another thing that really disturbs me – particularly in the US – is how addicted people are to substances. They're addicted to prescription medication, anti depressants, sleeping pills, medication for ADHD. It's a really scary trend and it affects younger people as well. Certain doctors, the medical establishments and the big pharma companies are all complicit because they spend billions of dollars developing new medications and protecting patents. It's a huge industry.

At YeloSpa we are trying to wean people off much of this medication; we've removed a lot of sleeping medication from people's lives, for example, because they know they have a place to nap.

What are the biggest challenges for the spa industry?

One of the big challenges for the industry is demonstrating that it has a purpose above and beyond just pampering rich ladies – that's still a common perception among many people who don't go to spas.

Where is your favourite place on earth?

Bahia in Brazil. It's a place where nature is very powerful and I find it very healing. Every time I need some sanity I escape there.

What is your favourite book?

One of my favourite books of all time is a French book called *Belle du Seigneur* by Albert Cohen. It's about human nature and where the excess of human nature can really lead you. It's an absolutely beautiful book.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

Everything in moderation, especially moderation. ●

THE DISRUPTORS

VAL KEMPADOO

After involvement in both the media and politics, social reformer and entrepreneur Valmiki Kempadoo has decided that hospitality is the way to create a sustainable future for the Caribbean. He talks to Kath Hudson



Valmiki Kempadoo has always had a strong interest in sustainability

With a mix of hotels, villas, spa and golf, Kittitian Hill, on the Caribbean island of St Kitts, might sound like a regular, albeit luxury, holiday resort. But look closer and it becomes evident that this is a game changer on many levels.

It's the manifestation of the philosophy of its founder Valmiki Kempadoo, who has been an organic farmer, landscape gardener, horticulturist, founded a tv station and formed two political parties. He believes tourism is the best vehicle for change and the best way of creating a sustainable future for the Caribbean.

The first phase of the US\$500m development, which started in 2010, is opening in December this year. It will include Belle Mont Farm, a collection of 84 farmhouses and a four bedroom suite; an 'edible' golf course, Irie Fields (more on this later), a fitness centre, bar and restaurant, as well as a clubhouse. By the end of 2015, the site will also have a spa, a farm-to-table restaurant, a conference centre and a central village, which will be the hub of the resort.

THE CONCEPT

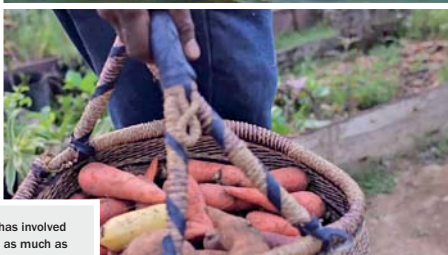
Kempadoo has tried to bring about change in the Caribbean in many ways, but after winning an election he became disillusioned, believing that while the government had changed, the politics had not.

"I asked myself, what can give us significant and lasting change for a sustainable future? It's a very young society, with a disturbed past," he says. "Tourism is the single largest driver for the region, but the business



The resort is set in 400 acres of organic farmland. The produce will be used in the resort's restaurants, and 'pick me' signs will invite guests to sample the fruit





Kempadoo has involved local people as much as possible: (Top left) a local fisherman; (Left) a farmer; (Bottom left) a shepherd



model being used by the large international resorts is not dissimilar to that of the plantation model of yesteryear: one of maximum extraction and exploitation. It's very sad that after 500 years we're still doing pretty much the same thing."

Intent on finding a new model and a new way forward for the industry, Kempadoo drew on his experiences in different areas – NGOs, private sector, government – to create a vehicle which could achieve a sustainable change.

To start with, he needed a suitable location. It had to be an island which was new and unpositioned in the tourism sector, without a strong branding. So this ruled out places like Barbados and St Lucia. Also he needed a government which would be supportive of a large scale development, based on a broad philosophic vision, rather than

attached to a big, international brand.

St Kitts presented the ideal opportunity. The government embraced the idea; the economy was in transition, moving away from being an agrarian, sugar-producing island. Tourism was yet to take hold, but the island was easily accessible, with a road running all the way around and flights directly from New York, Miami and London.

"It is not the classic white sand type of island of the Caribbean," says Kempadoo. "We do have white sand, but we also have volcanic black sand beaches and steep mountains – the new village will go from 500 feet to 1,000 feet, with beautiful views."

Kempadoo's philosophy was to develop the resort purely using local and regional people. However, as he got further into the project, he realised that he couldn't meet all of his objec-

tives unless he went international. So although he has used local teams for the building work, he had to look further afield for some elements, including the architecture.

Bill Bensley, who specialises in tropical resorts, was chosen for this role.

"The international team have taken the development to another level," he says. "Bill's background is in landscape architecture; he is focused on the externals, rather than just the buildings. I was really impressed with how he took the vernacular architecture of St Kitts and quickly distilled it into modern resort architecture, with a bit of an edge to it."

FARM TO TABLE

Kempadoo acquired 400 acres, which is equally split between a golf course and development, including four 100-



(Top and bottom left) Local contractors have been used to build the resort; (top right) One of the gardeners at Kittitian Hill



“

The tourism model used by the large international resorts is not dissimilar to the plantation model of yesteryear: one of maximum extraction and exploitation

”

bed boutique hotels and 75 villas.

The 18-hole championship golf course, Irie Fields, has a couple of interesting USPs: it will be one of only three organic golf courses in the world and the management claim it will be the world's most edible golf course, with 75 acres of the 200 acre course being farmed.

"There are three issues with golf courses which we've tried to avoid," explains Kempadoo. "The water usage, the pesticides and fertilisers and the land use. Nobody really talks about how much land golf courses tie up. We came up with the idea of resolving this by farming the areas around the golf course with edible plants."

More than 100 different varieties of mango have been planted and other specialities grown there will include avocados and signature rare fruits.

Sustainable sourcing and farm-to-table are two other threads running through Kittitian Hill. Kempadoo believes that within five years, the island will export more than it imports. To this end, even crops of chocolate and coffee have been planted.

Some cereals, oils, wine and red meat will have to be imported, although there is a discussion about whether or not to even offer red meat, since it's not authentic. Apart from a few popular labels, all the wine imported will be natural and organic.

The culinary team is being put together to define the restaurants. The highest culinary experience will be farm-to-table restaurant The Table, which will open in 2015 and is influenced by other farm-to-table restaurants like Roganics in London. The others will be simple, based on

healthy and local ingredients.

The staff will eat their meals in one of the restaurants; rather than having a staff cafeteria hidden away, Kempadoo wanted to make the staff part of the action with a casual, local food restaurant. "We're not going for discreet Asian service," says Kempadoo. "Our people are too naturally gregarious for that."

MANGO WALK

Kempadoo has high hopes that the spa, Mango Walk, will become a significant destination spa. Slated to open at the end of 2015, he says it will offer unusual spa treatments.

The spa team is currently researching all the local and regional indigenous treatments in order to offer a menu which is rooted in the history and culture of the area – with



a leaf wrap being developed.

"There won't be Himalayan salt scrubs; we'll be using local sea salt to make our own salt scrubs," says Kempadoo. "We'll be planting the botanicals on our own farm and organically producing our own oils and mixes."

There will be 16 treatment rooms and four specialist rooms, all designed in vernacular Kittitian style.

Other features include meditation gardens and a self-guided walk to encourage people to wind down and immerse themselves in nature.

There will also be a hyper saline pool, hot and cold water treatments in pools, a steamroom, and a 'yoga cathedral,' made purely out of bamboo.

The spa and the hotels will be run by Sedona Resorts. "We spent a while looking for a hotel operator that would be willing to operate a hotel without imposing their brand on it, and that also fitted with the philosophy," says Kempadoo. "I sought a partner that would take the same care that I'd put into the development of the resort, and would run the hospitality with that same level of care."

AFFLUENT LIBERALS

Affluent liberals have been identified as the main target market for this holiday experience, and New York and London have large concentrations of this demographic. "We didn't start by identifying a target market and then developing a concept," explains



Kempadoo. "We started with a vision and then went out to find resonance. The group of people we're aiming for are metropolitan and wealthy, but not mainstream conservative wealthy.

"They are progressive, edgy, arty: filmmakers and advertising executives. They go to the Tate Modern, eat in farm-to-table restaurants and like art, culture and travel."

People from this demographic are seeking authentic experiences, says Kempadoo. They don't want to have a holiday which they feel is imposed on a destination, but want to feel integrated and meet the local people. They would rather spend their money on

The architecture, landscape and interior design are by architect Bill Bensley and have been inspired by traditional St Kittian architecture. Local contractors are being used

experiences than material possessions. "We believe experience will be the new luxury," he says. "Gucci and Prada handbags belong to the past and conservative affluent people."

When the development is fully up and running, Kempadoo plans to focus on creating the Kittitian Hill Institute, a place of higher and aspirational thinking, with a significant Caribbean library, an art gallery and a place where people can meet and debate.

Kittitian Hill has already attracted the attention of other Caribbean governments who are keen to do similar projects, working with their own people as opposed to relying on external sources to develop their islands.

However, the main aim of this project, and what will mark it out as being a success in Kempadoo's eyes, is whether or not it can bring about the change he desires: a legacy he's inherited from his father, who also worked with NGO movements around the world specialising in rural developments and intercultural relations.

"My father taught me that societies are changed one person at a time," he says. "Change is slow and takes time and resources," he says. ●

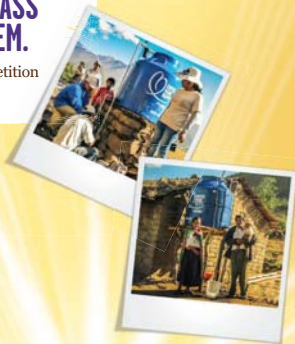
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MOHAI

MOHAI's executive director, Leonard Garfield, describes the Seattle museum's exciting new development, the Bezos Center for Innovation, named after its principal donor – Amazon founder Jeff Bezos

What was the inspiration for the Bezos Center for Innovation?

When we were discussing themes, we realised Seattle has seen a persistent focus on innovation during the last 100 years: companies come to this region to invent the future. So a museum with innovation as the core theme seemed to be appropriate.

What's its main aim?

We set out to present the story of innovation and engage the community with that story, encouraging young people to discuss innovation, the tradition of innovation and how to build the future of innovation. To safeguard our own future, we want to prepare the workforce and community mindset.



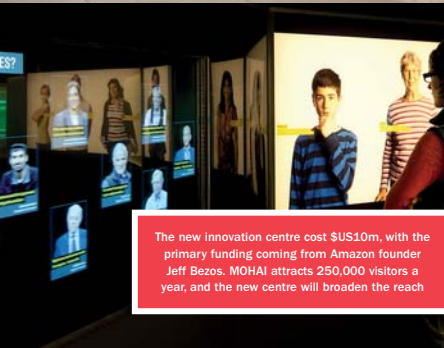
It's not just about inspiring the next generation of entrepreneurs, we want young people to understand that innovation comes in all areas: not just research and development, but civic life and culture and other areas as well.

The lone inventor with a great idea is not necessarily a great innovator: innovation is a team sport.

Have you been inspired by any other museums?

There are some great innovation museums out there, including the Tech Museum of Innovation in San Jose and the Henry Ford Museum in Detroit.

However the main inspiration has come from the great innovations within our own community. We talked with



The new innovation centre cost \$US10m, with the primary funding coming from Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. MOHAI attracts 250,000 visitors a year, and the new centre will broaden the reach

JEFF BEZOS SAYS:

“Look at the disproportionate number of extraordinary organisations founded in Seattle – Microsoft, Costco, Boeing, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, PACCAR – even UPS was founded here. These companies and their innovations have had a big impact on Seattle, the country, and the world. There’s something about Seattle that has made it an unusually good place to innovate, and the MOHAI Center for Innovation will help Seattle continue on that course by showcasing and teaching how industrial innovation can play an important role in human advancement. New treatments, affordable flights, a computer on every desk – the core activities of these Seattle organisations have created benefit for people at home and around the world.”



Jeff Bezos was passionate about sharing the story of the history of innovation. Seattle is his hometown and being involved with this centre was a way of reaching out to the broader community

several dozen history makers about what they felt was important to share with seventh graders and then we have presented their thoughts.

Where has funding come from?

Overall, the Bezos Center has cost US\$10m (£6m, £7.3m). The primary funding came from Jeff and MacKenzie Bezos and the rest has come from general funding raised by the museum. Like all US museums, we’re self-funded.

When did Jeff Bezos become involved?

We began talking to him in the fall of 2011. He became familiar with our programme and we shared our ideas and

expanded the mission of the museum.

He felt passionately about sharing the story of the history of innovation with a broader audience. Seattle is his hometown and being involved with this centre was one way of reaching out to the broader community.

Among our goals was to reach young people. We wanted to share the innovation tradition with them.

How involved was Jeff Bezos in the project?

Jeff Bezos inspired the development of the centre and continued to encourage us throughout the project.

MOHAI is honoured to be associated with him and the other great innovators included in the Bezos Center.

Who were the designers?

We worked with local architectural firm, Olson Kundig Architects, who have a reputation for being wonderful experimental exhibit designers. Another Seattle firm, Pacific Studio, was responsible for the primary design fabrication and San Francisco company, Stimulant, did the interactive media.

What was your brief to them?

Create something beautiful and engaging, present the rich history of Seattle and inspire innovation.

Can you describe some of the content?

The centre is a combination of exhibits, oral history, programmes and



The stories behind innovations in all sectors are on display

- interactives, asking what it means to be innovative and how we stay innovative.

The Patent Tree details patents over the past 100 years for all types of objects from umbrellas to medical equipment. There are first person oral accounts from innovators themselves about what inspired them: you can hear people like Howard Schultz, who started Starbucks, and Jeff Bezos talk about what it takes for a company to stay at the cutting edge, or hear them talk about their personal lives.

Visitors can also record what they think about innovation, and what they think will be the next challenge. They can post their ideas in a number of ways: graphically, digitally, or by typing ideas in response to questions from other visitors. They can also conjure up their own invention, or build a business plan and compare it with others.

What's the most popular feature?

What's Next is an exhibit which changes and discusses the future of innovation. Recently we looked at what

ABOUT BEZOS CENTER FOR INNOVATION

With the aim of 'igniting the innovator within', the Bezos Center for Innovation opened its doors at Seattle's Museum of History & Industry (MOHAI) last October.

This US\$10m (£6m, £7.3m) extension to the original 62-year-old Seattle museum furthers the vision of the museum to inspire people to create a better future for themselves and their communities.

It believes that the preservation and exploration of the past is essential to effective decision-making in the future.

Seattle has spawned many of the world's most successful companies, including Amazon, Starbucks, Microsoft, Expedia and Boeing.

The centre is both a celebration of this successful track record, and prepares the ground for more homegrown talent, inspiring high school children to continue their city's legacy.

Amazon founder and chief executive Jeff Bezos – who created the largest retailer on the internet – is the principal donor, allowing the museum to become a reality.

would come next in the video game industry. Seattle is home to the US headquarters of a number of big names in the industry including Nintendo, Xbox and Valve. We invited young producers to come in and talk about what's happening and visitors had the opportunity to test games which aren't yet on the

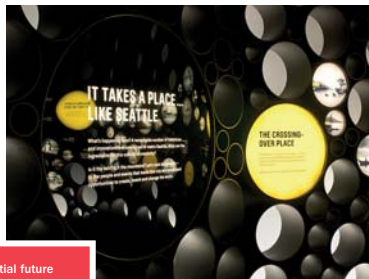
market. Their feedback was then used in games development.

How many companies are showcased?

Hundreds. From big names like Boeing, Starbucks and Amazon to lots of companies that are still seek-



As potential future innovators, teenagers are a key target audience



There's something about Seattle that has made it an unusually good place to innovate, and the MOHAI Center for Innovation will help Seattle continue on that course



ing venture capital. We've identified some of the most cutting edge innovation companies, and although some may not be in business next year, we expect others to be shaping the world in 10 or 20 years' time.

Who's the target audience for the museum?

We're a general museum, so we want to target everyone, but the main demographic we want to engage with is younger people at high school: the pre-teens and young teens who are receptive to information. We also want to reach young professionals.

How many visitors do you expect to attract?

In the last year, MOHAI has attracted 250,000, which is more than antici-

pated in our business plan. It costs \$14 (£8.40, £10.20) for adults, and under-15s go free.

What has been the response so far?

Visitors to MOHAI have participated, become members, shared ideas and attended events, so the response has been great and we will keep growing and expanding.

What sort of community and educational programmes are you running?

All young visitors get an innovation pack, in a backpack, to help them engage with the centre. We've also run classroom programmes, lectures and panel discussions and are identifying partnerships with Seattle companies.

What were the main challenges?

Getting all of the stories and artefacts in. Making those decisions was hard because there are so many stories and people and voices.

How has the Bezos Center benefited the museum?

It's the first thing you see on the visit, so whereas history museums usually start with the distant past and work up to the present day, we begin our experience with today's history, making you think of the future.

What are you most proud of?

There's a cliché in the US: build it and people will come, but in the museum world you do wonder about that! So I'm very proud of the fact people are coming, engaging and learning. ●



MARTIN DALBY

As Center Parcs' fifth park opens, the company's CEO talks to Magali Robathan about overhauling the planning process, eyeing up Ireland and further afield

On 6 June, Center Parcs' fifth UK village, Center Parcs Woburn, opened to the public. It was a long time coming for many people; none more so than Center Parcs' chief executive Martin Dalby.

"It was a bit surreal," says Dalby, of the opening day. "I was up at six, pacing around the lodge where I was staying. We'd been working on the park for so long, and had to jump through so many hoops to get to this stage, I couldn't quite believe we'd done it. The dream had finally come true."

It took 10 years from finding the site to opening the new village, and at one point it looked as though it might never

happen, when the planning permission was refused by Mid Bedfordshire District Council. Center Parcs appealed the decision and permission was eventually granted in September 2007.

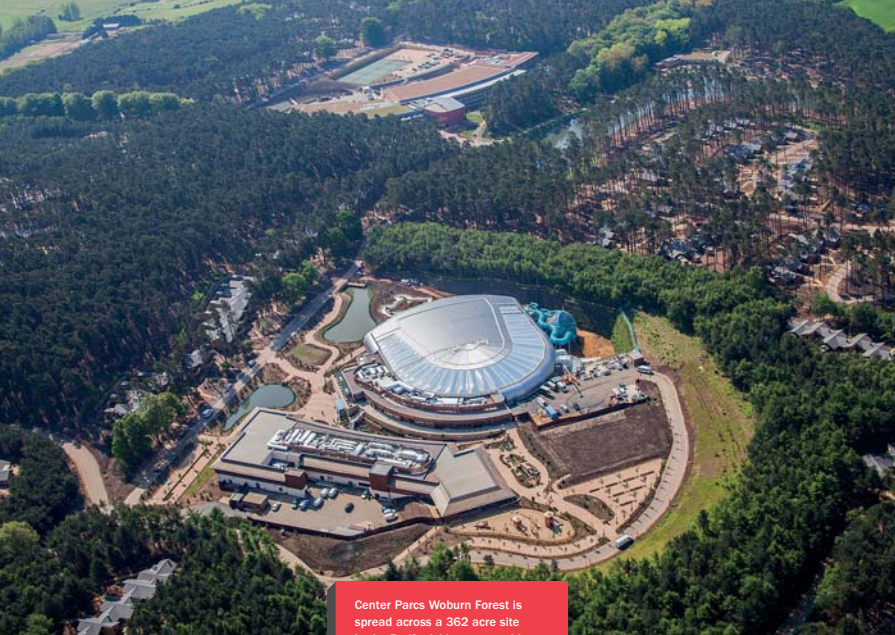
But just when it looked as though things were back on track, the recession hit and construction was put on hold, delaying the project further.

In 2012, the company refinanced its debt and raised £150m towards the construction of Woburn Forest (with Blackstone committing an additional £100m), and in May 2012 construction began in earnest. Two years later, on a sunny June morning, Dalby and the team got ready to welcome the first paying guests to the park.

"It was a day to remember," says Dalby. "Around 10am we got the first 20 families into the park together. We gave them a glass of champagne, I said a few words of welcome. The sun was shining brightly. It was a nice moment."

WOBURN FOREST

Center Parcs has stuck to its existing formula with Woburn Forest – with occupancy at 97.2 per cent over the previous 12 months across the other four UK villages and 1.7 million people visiting, the management are not likely to muck around with their offer too much. The site is 362 acres, and it features 625 lodges, a 75 bedroom hotel, a lake, 16 restaurants and



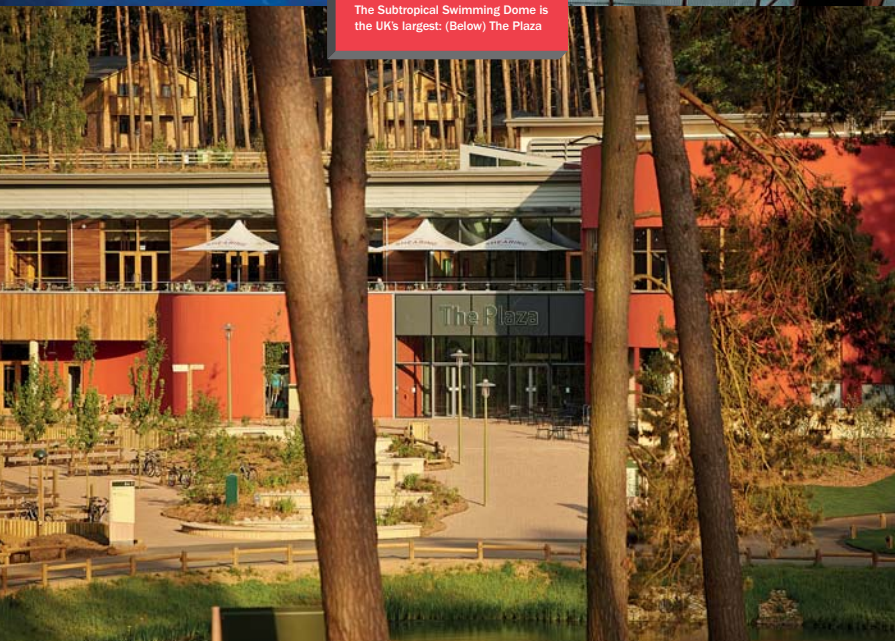
Center Parcs Woburn Forest is spread across a 362 acre site in the Bedfordshire countryside. The Dome overlooks the lake



INTERVIEW



(Top left) The Tornado is one of three new water rides; (Top right) The Subtropical Swimming Dome is the UK's largest; (Below) The Plaza





The design of the lodges at Center Parcs' other UK villages has been tweaked for Woburn Forest

Why does the planning process take years and years and millions of pounds? For big, economically important projects like ours, there must be a better way

bars, more than 100 leisure activities, an Aqua Sana spa and of course the Subtropical Swimming Dome, which is at the heart of all Center Parcs resorts.

Although the offer is very similar to that of Center Parcs' four other UK villages, the company has taken the opportunity to update the design and accommodation in Woburn Forest.

"It's 2014 so it's more contemporary in its styling; we've used new interior designs, the place is very spacious, the quality of materials is very high. The whole place has a real quality feel to it," says Dalby.

The Subtropical Swimming Dome has also been updated – it is the biggest in the UK, and features three new water rides; Twister (an enclosed bodyslide flume), Typhoon (a two seater tube ride) and Tornado, a family ride raft that starts with a dark tunnel and a 45 degree drop before propelling riders into a huge funnel at speeds of up to 20mph.

"It's pretty frightening and great fun," says Dalby, of the Tornado ride. "It took me an hour to persuade my wife to go down it, but once she'd tried it I couldn't get her off!"

The Aqua Sana spa has also been updated, with Woburn Forest embracing a new spa concept developed by Schletterer Wellness & Spa Design and Sparc Studio. The three floor facility is split into six smaller themed spas, featuring 22 treatment rooms and 25 experience rooms, as well as six spa suites. (For more information on the Aqua Sana facility, see p36.)

STARTING OUT

Dalby left school at 16 for a traineeship in the accounts department at Scottish and Newcastle. From there he worked his way up, rising through the ranks to the position of financial controller. In 1995 he joined Center Parcs as financial controller, and was instantly impressed with the welcoming atmosphere of the company. "It doesn't take long for the whole ethos and culture of Center Parcs to get into your blood," he says. In 1997 he became finance director and in 2000, when the previous chief executive stepped down suddenly, the chairman asked Dalby if he wanted to take up the role.

"It was an amazing thing – to be asked to become CEO of such a fantastic brand was a real honour," says Dalby. He was just 38 at the time, and had only ever worked in financial roles before. Was he daunted? "No, no, not at all," he says.

You get the impression that not a lot phases Dalby, which is a good thing, as he's had his fair share of challenges during his 14 years at the helm of Center Parcs. The company has gone through several changes of ownership since he took over – in 2001, Scottish and Newcastle, who'd owned it since 1989, sold out to Deutsche Bank Capital Partners. The operating side of the business was floated on London's Alternative Investment Market, and the property part of it was sold off in a sale and leaseback deal. In 2005 the operating company moved to the main listing on the London Stock Exchange,

before private equity firm Blackstone bought it a year later, in March 2006.

Center Parcs had a challenging time as a public company. Despite having high occupancy and good profits, the company was hit with several problems during this time, including an outbreak of gastroenteritis at its Longleat village and soaring energy and rates prices. When Blackstone bought it, it paid 80p a share – 20p below the 100p floatation price.

Then, of course, there was Woburn. Center Parcs first found the site in Bedfordshire back in 2004, and announced that its fifth UK village would open by 2008. However they reckoned without the planning process – it took five years and £5m to get the project through planning, and permission was only approved when then communities secretary Hazel Blears ignored the advice of the planning inspector and decided that the economic, ecological and employment benefits outweighed any perceived harm to Green Belt land.

"It was very frustrating at times," says Dalby. "This is a massive project, with a massive impact, both on Bedfordshire and tourism in the UK. It injects more than £20m into the local economy, it creates 1,500 jobs, it's great for the environment, it avoids people having to commute out of Bedfordshire to go and find work. With that in mind, why does the planning process takes years and years and millions of pounds? For big projects like ours, there must be a better way."



(Above) Center Parcs offers a Segway experience, with tuition and a chance to ride the machines on a practice track

Dalby's lowest point was in the council chamber on 18 July 2006. "We were nine committee members for the project, nine against, and the chairman decided to cast his vote against. That was a pretty disappointing thing for him to do," he says.

Did Dalby ever think the project wouldn't happen? "No, I'm too determined for that. After that meeting, we went back to our hotel, had a few beers, then thought, to hell with these guys, we're going to appeal it."

"It's only through the perseverance of our company that we made it to this point," says Dalby. "Many other companies would have fallen at some of the hurdles we've had to jump."

It's time for a rethink of the planning laws in the UK, argues Dalby. So what would he suggest? "There's too much that gets tied up in the local process, with the local authority making decisions on projects that are of a national scale," he says. "I think there needs to be some sort of process that takes these significant, economically important projects and finds a way to fast track them and bypass the local authority involvement."

LOOKING AHEAD

After all the challenges and hard work of getting Woburn Forest up and running, the next 12 months will see Center Parcs in a consolidation phase.

"The most immediate thing is to bring Woburn Forest into the fold

– get the place settled in, get everything running really well," says Dalby. "For the longer term, my role as CEO is to look for opportunities for growing the business, to think about where the next site might be."

Woburn Forest is likely to be the last Center Parcs Village on the UK mainland, with existing villages in the Lake District, the Midlands, the South West, the Eastern counties and of course Woburn, slap bang in the middle.

"We've got the whole place covered, quite frankly," says Dalby. "The population of the UK is 63 million, and two million people will come and have a holiday with Center Parcs in the next 12 months. That's more than three per cent, so our penetration of the market is very high. There's not really any need for another facility."

Ireland is a different matter, however. "There don't seem to be any facilities in Ireland for the type of customers that come to a Center Parcs. It's certainly an attractive market for us," he says.

Have they begun looking for sites there yet? "We've had a couple of little trips over there to see how the land lies, but there's nothing specific at this stage." What would they look for

in a site? "It's the same ingredients as over here – some coniferous trees, about 400 acres of land," he says, adding that somewhere central would be ideal. "You've got to think about the whole of Ireland – north and south – as the marketplace."

Further ahead, the company would be open to building a park overseas. He has mentioned China and India in the past, but is vague when I ask him. "Who knows? We don't have any particular boundaries, so we'd go wherever the market and economic conditions were right. We'll probably go a bit closer to home first though."

A change of ownership is also likely to be on the cards at some point in the not too distant future – there have been several rumours that Blackstone is exploring its options for exiting the business. "Clearly we've got to get Woburn Forest open and stable and get the accounts in place first, so I think it will be some time off yet," says Dalby. Is he worried about the possibility of the company going public again, after last time? "Not at all," he insists. "Our world is very different today. The company is much bigger than it was last time, and is in a much stronger position than it was back then. We'd be very happy to do that if that's what Blackstone wanted to do."

As for Dalby himself, he has no plans to go anywhere. "I'm afraid Center Parcs is stuck with me for a while yet," he laughs. ●



MARTIN DALBY

Quick-fire Questions

What do you attribute the success of Center Parcs to?

Three things. Firstly our reputation – we've built the brand up over the past 27 years, and people trust us. They know that if they come to Center Parcs they'll have a good experience. It's a very aspirational brand, and that's been part of its success.

Secondly, we reinvest our profits significantly back into the business every year to upgrade the park, maintain the quality, innovate and bring new additions to the facilities. Over the last six years, we've invested more than £350m in the four core business parks – we could have built another park with that money, but it's really important that our parks are well maintained. That drives the level of repeat business and therefore the very high level of occupancy.

The most important factor in our success is our staff. We have 7,500 employees now. These are the guys that deliver a fantastic experience, and that really make the difference.

How much has the company changed since you joined?

I joined Center Parcs more than 20 years ago. Back then we were owned by Scottish and Newcastle and our head office was in Rotterdam, so we went over to Holland a lot. The ethos and vision of the business hasn't changed though. It's still about being with your family in a forest environ-

“ If you're going to do something, do it well. Otherwise, don't bother doing it at all ”

ment, about healthy living and active holidays, about lifestyle and caring for the environment.

How has Center Parcs' commitment to the environment evolved?

Center Parcs has always been a leading company in terms of caring for the environment and its sustainability credentials. It's very important to us – it's in our blood.

When I joined, caring for the environment was important, but it has definitely become more prominent in the business. We now have a sustainability manager who does nothing else but think about how we can become even more sustainable. Before we make any investments, we absolutely consider their impact on the environment. With Woburn Forest, we are aiming to use 25 per cent less carbon than in our other villages. Across our parks, we're fully committed to reducing our carbon emissions by 20 per cent by 2020. We started in 2010 and we're already over half way there.

It's also important to us to educate our guests – to show them that you can save money and look after the environment at the same time.

What drives you?

I enjoy setting objectives, and achieving those aims. For me to be the head of a fantastic family brand that just about everyone has heard of, that's delivering a great holiday experience – that's enough to drive anyone.

What has been your biggest achievement?

During my time as CEO, we've seen Center Parcs grow significantly in terms of its profitability and the value of the business.

Every year for 15 years we've been able to grow the profit, push hard on occupancies. That's got to be my biggest achievement.

How do you spend your leisure time?

I do a bit of wood turning in my spare time, making fruit bowls and lamps and so on. I have a workshop that I disappear into – that's my 'me time'.

What's your philosophy?

If you're going to do something, do it well. If not, don't bother doing it at all.

What is your ultimate ambition?

To carry on doing what I'm doing.



Donna McKee is spa manager at Woburn Forest

Aqua Sana at Woburn Forest

"This is the biggest, most innovative spa we've ever created, a concept that has evolved from the success of our existing Aqua Sanas," says Woburn construction director Don Camilleri of the Aqua Sana spa at Woburn Forest.

The facility is actually made up of six smaller spas all inspired by nature and combining different approaches from many of Europe's leading establishments. The six spas are themed around Fire and Ice, Mineral and Gemstone, Blossom, Herbal, Sensory and Salt.

Each spa holds a variety of multi-sensory experience rooms and there is an outdoor infinity pool looking out across Woburn Forest.

The Aqua Sana concept was designed and developed by Schletterer Wellness & Spa Design and Sparc Studio.

As well as 25 experience rooms there are also 22 treatment rooms across the six different areas with products from Elemis, Decl  r and Bliss.

Facilities in the six sections include three saunas, a snow and ice room,



Woburn construction director Don Camilleri

six multi-sensory shower rooms, five relaxation lounges, two steamrooms, a heat room, a herbal inhalation bath, two steam cabins, a meditation room, a salt inhalation room, a zen garden and a mineral room.

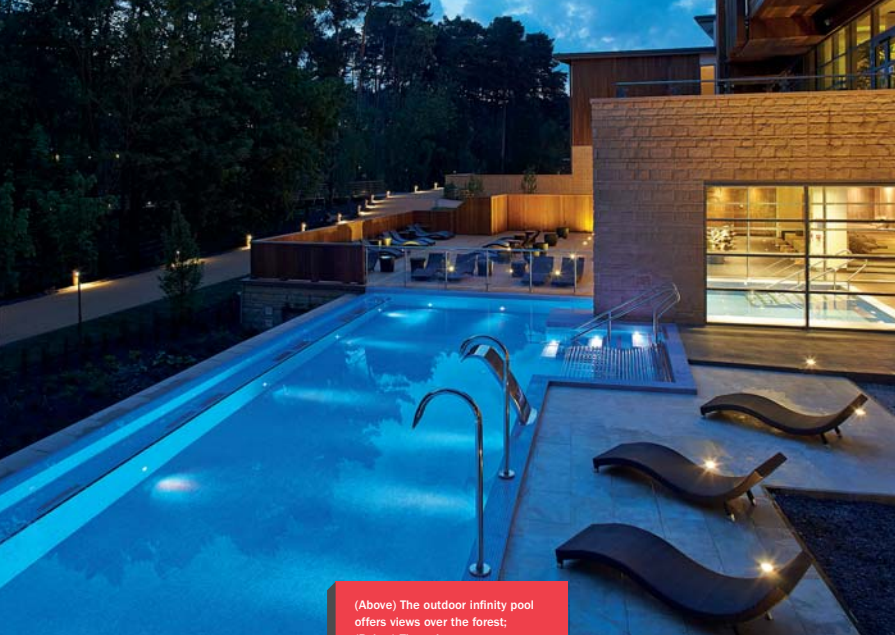
Also included is a boutique, gym and Vital   Caf   Bar serving Mediterranean refreshments and light cuisine.

There are also six luxury spa suites housed on the top two floors, offering direct access to the spa. These feature oversized bath tubs and private balconies, and mean guests don't have to use the communal changing areas.

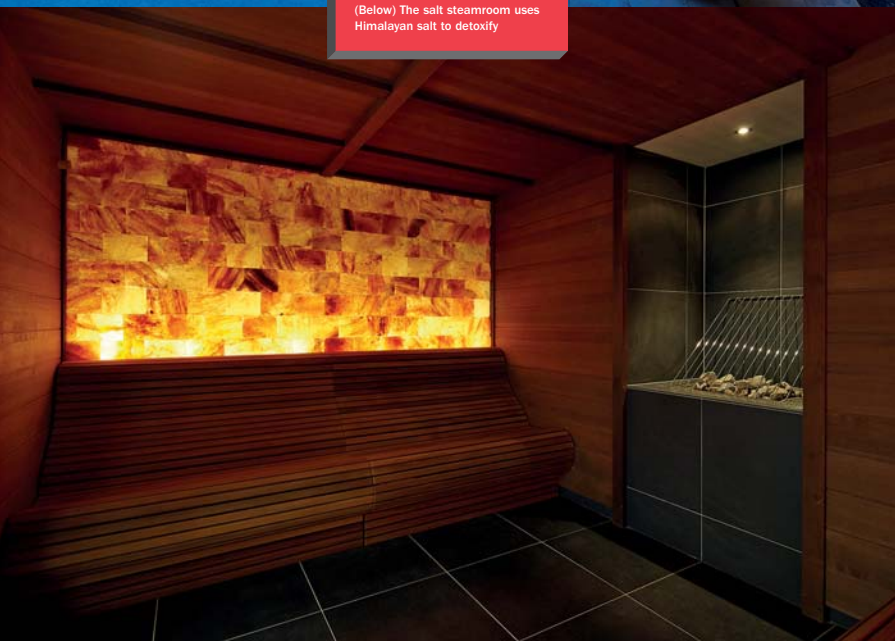


(This pic) The Crystal Steam Bath;
(Below) Lava Volcano Sauna;
(Bottom) The Blossom Heat Room





(Above) The outdoor infinity pool offers views over the forest;
(Below) The salt steamroom uses Himalayan salt to detoxify



Centre Parcs Woburn first person

THE PARK LIZ TERRY, EDITOR, LEISURE MANAGEMENT

My first impression is that this is the Center Parcs for London. It has a more urban aesthetic, is more 'designed', with higher spec accommodation, more upscale retail, a fabulous spa and a hotel with beautiful spa suites.



With London less than an hour away by rail and road, this is the site which will draw the yummy mummies and co and they won't be disappointed.

Our light, airy and comfortable house was all ensuite, with its own sauna in the garden and plenty of room to hang out and spend time with family. Built on two levels, it had a balcony with a view of the lake and all the sensible Dutch Center Parcs touches. My only concern would be whether the kitchen cupboards will wear well.

The Subtropical Paradise at Woburn has – in my view – a less lavish and intuitively designed pool and adult waterplay area when compared with the other villages, however, it has a new focus on kids' waterplay and adrenaline rides: MD Martin

Dalby told me research showed visitors thought the pool needed spicing up – hence the addition of some pretty scary drop rides, one of which had me spinning screaming (loudly) and hurtling backwards in a four person inner tube.

Center Parcs' vision has always been that the sightlines of the bungalows ensured each existed in its own private space. It feels as though this rule has been overridden in places at Woburn, giving the site a less mysterious feel and although the overall look will soften

once the vegetation has grown up, the layout is more open and like a housing estate than in previous villages.

The other four villages are buried deep in the woods, so as you arrive you feel you're withdrawing from the world. Woburn doesn't do this – you're straight into the car park with a brusqueness that fails to charm. My preference would be for this to be addressed in the way the customer journey is evolved, by taking a new route in.

Center Parcs is a great model and one I believe could be replicated almost anywhere in the world. Although the team has plans to develop a site in Ireland, I think they should look to global expansion too.

The fact the brand is split with Pierre et Vacances in Europe makes this a slightly more challenging dream, but still one which is possible to achieve.

Center Parcs is a great model and one which could be replicated almost anywhere in the world. Although the current team has plans to develop in Ireland, they should look to global expansion too

THE SPA HELEN ANDREWS, JOURNALIST, SPA BUSINESS MAGAZINE

The spa is accessed from the World of Spa reception. You start with a foot bath

which has three different massage settings and different essential oils – rose, mint and orange. You can then explore the facility in your own time. The spa is huge, and I as though I wouldn't be able to do it all in a day.

I really enjoyed the inhalation steam-rooms, some of which had warm showers that went off intermittently. The idea of having a separate relaxation room per zone initially seemed a bit extravagant, but this is a spa that's very much focused on social bonding and relaxation, so having areas in which to congregate and talk makes sense.



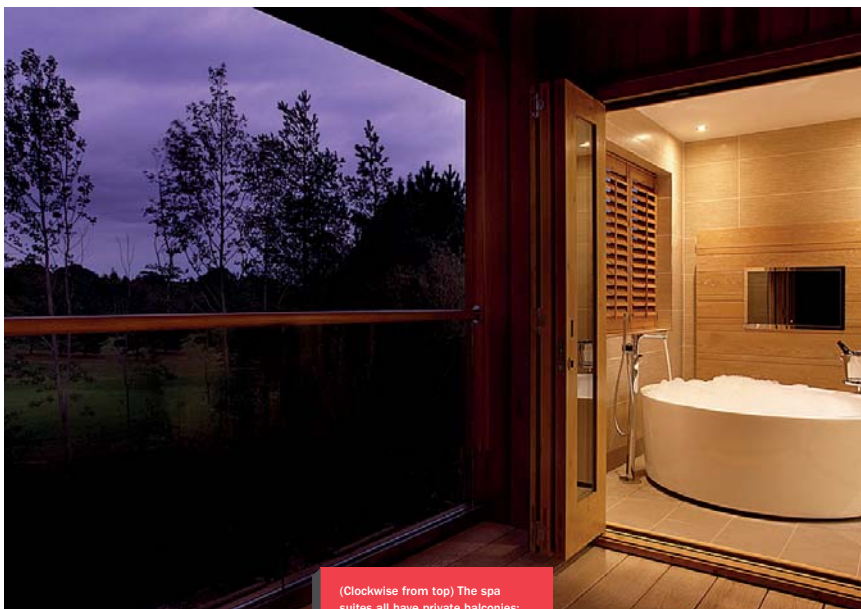
I was impressed at the amount of thought that had gone into finding the right design of wheelchair, so that there is a collapsable, easy to manoeuvre chair that doesn't heat up too much available for use in the spa, meaning it's accessible to everyone.

The infinity pool had a bubble jet bench on one side and a bubble bed grate on the other that you could lie down on – but what was really cool were the jets by the pool which massaged your back and shoulders if you stood under them – one of them was so fast and furious it almost hurt.

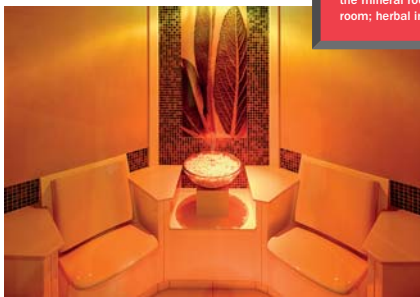
I had a Decleor Aromatherapy Massage, which focuses on key pressure points. My therapist – Chloe

– gave me a full-body massage with a Decleor oil that smelled of citrus in a room where the lights changed from blue to pink and back again slowly. The massage combined soft strokes with occasional bursts of deep tissue therapy. She focused on my thighs and upper back with the deep tissue strokes using her elbows and forearms to stretch my muscles. At some points I wasn't expecting such an intense pressure but the relief it provided afterwards was just what I needed. She held my hand to massage the full length of my arms, as she smoothed the tension and tightness from my wrists and elbows. I felt totally relaxed afterwards.

Overall, I had a great time, although I'd be wary of how busy it might get during peak times. ●



(Clockwise from top) The spa suites all have private balconies; the mineral room; salt inhalation room; herbal inhalation baths



Is the UK government's crackdown on term-time holidays damaging tourism?

Reporting by Jak Phillips
and Magali Robathan

In September 2013, legislation came into force meaning that headteachers are no longer able to authorise requests for parents to take their children out of school during term time. Previously, heads were able to use their discretion to authorise absences in 'special circumstances', which allowed some parents to take their children out of school for short breaks or holidays when prices were lower, however, under the new rules, parents can now be fined £60 per child per week for unauthorised absence.

Some parents are furious about this change, saying that it hits families who can't afford to go away during the school holidays, when prices can be as much as double those during term time. In turn operators say the rules are affect-



ing their businesses, and that they're seeing a drop in the numbers of families taking shorter breaks out of season.

So are the new rules fair? What impact are they having on the tourism industry? And are tourism companies exploiting families by hiking up their prices during the school holidays, or is it a simple case of supply and demand, with organisations making money during the peak season to see them through the rest of the year?

We speak to some of those affected by the change to find out.

A fining system favours families who can afford to pay the fines

Kurt Janson, policy director,
Tourism Alliance

There's a perception that tourism businesses increase their prices in order to profit-gouge from families during the school holidays. However, many tourism businesses are only economically viable for four to six months of the year and price differences that occur are mainly a result of significant discounting by tourism businesses during off-peak periods.



It's very hard to get people to travel outside peak periods and tourism businesses have to undertake significant price reductions in order to stimulate demand and gain the cashflow they need to retain staff and stay open.

Travel and holidays can well be important in a child's development. The tourism industry would welcome a debate as to how to resolve the problem of enabling families to undertake more affordable holidays while not adversely impacting on their education – it's a question of getting the right sort of balance. Spreading demand would be of considerable benefit to the tourism industry, as extending the tourism season would help with maintaining the viability of many businesses.

The problem with a fining system is that it favours those families that can pay the fines rather than those that are the poorest. In effect, it becomes a fee to take children out of school that only affluent families are able to pay.

Our users think holiday companies are exploiting parents

Justine Roberts, CEO, Mumsnet



With the introduction of fines for taking children out of school during term-time combined with sky-high travel costs it feels like a lose-lose situation for parents. Three quarters of Mumsnet users think holiday companies are exploiting parents who have no choice about when they travel.

Obviously it's hard to refute the laws of supply and demand, but equally, holiday companies seem to be happily making extraordinary profits out of families and not surprisingly many feel

that they are being ripped off.

Most parents would rather not take their children out of school, but for many families it can be the only way to afford a holiday, as travel companies ratchet up their prices to such an extent during peak times.

Many Mumsnet users are frustrated by a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to fining for term-time absences and would rather heads use their discretion more, especially when the absence is for occasions like family weddings or once-in-a-lifetime trips.



This policy is having a serious effect on our business

Lynne Johnson, Cranmer Country Cottages

The government policy of fining parents for taking their children out of school during term time is having a serious effect on our business.

We have eight holiday cottages converted from a Victorian dairy farm in North Norfolk and this policy is forcing us to reevaluate our strategy. Our cottages were developed for, and are targeted at, young families.

Despite popular belief, we don't 'hike' up our prices during school holidays and we don't exploit families. We look carefully at the figures for the

year and work out our prices so we can sustain our business during the rest of the year. We offer discounts on off-peak periods which often bring us down to break-even costs.

Previously our guests have been able to take advantage of these discounted rates by taking their children out of school for one day and taking a long weekend. Or if there was a school inset day they might have added a day to make up a mid-week break. It's this business which is being damaged by the government policy.

The feedback we're getting is that guests are looking for a two night break rather than the traditional three night break. The cost to us of a two night break is much the same as a three night break but we can't expect guests to pay that extra cost. We have had to make the decision to offer a cheaper two night break with people leaving on Sunday afternoon rather than Monday morning, but it means restructuring the business – we don't normally have staff on site on Sunday and it is important to us that we send our guests off with the same friendly service we offer on a Monday.

It has been suggested that the government staggers school holiday dates. This would benefit businesses and families as accommodation providers would be able to flatten their prices more if they felt that there was more than 20 weeks' guaranteed business. ●



BIDDING FOR

THE OBESITY BUCK

From health clubs and urban planners to science centres and drug companies, everyone is pitching to solve the problem of obesity. Kath Hudson takes a look at some of the groups and their proposals



A

According to the UK think tank Overseas Development Institute, one in three people worldwide are now overweight. Even developing nations are getting fatter, as incomes rise and diets become more fatty and sugary.

There's a large consensus of expert opinion that says the obesity epidemic is down to a combination of easy access to cheap, highly calorific food – which is often aggressively marketed – and increasingly less active lifestyles.

So what's the answer? Various industries have claimed they hold the key to tackling the obesity crisis and while the debate rages about whether obesity is a disease, a disability or a lifestyle illness, this is a business opportunity where there'll always be plenty of demand.

We look at some of the proposals put forward by groups aiming to own the opportunity.



The Soil Association launched the Food for Life campaign in 2003

SCIENCE CENTRES

On the basis that they can hold conversations with the public, science centres have recently put themselves forward as part of the solution to the problem of obesity.

For the past three years, 17 science centres across Europe have taken part in the EU initiative Inprofood. This asks the public if they think governments should take responsibility for the obesity epidemic, or if it comes down to individuals. This November, the results will be collated and the feedback from different nations compared.

In a separate initiative, Ecsite, the European organisation representing science centres, museums and institutes, created the PlayDecide discussion game, aimed at 14 to 21-year-olds, asking them about issues such as eating disorders, food waste, sustainable eating and personal accountability over food choices.

According to Ecsite, the results so far show that the majority of people believe decisions and choices related to life-

"We think the health sector should be setting an example, especially as good nutrition aids patient recovery" Amy Leech, the Soil Association

styles should be left to citizens, but they think governments should regulate certain areas, such as food labelling and prices, and should support healthy food providers, provide infrastructure and encourage physical activities.

Respondents also believed healthy lifestyles should be part of the school curriculum and that school meals should be carefully chosen.

SCHOOLS

With its Food for Life Partnership, the Soil Association has been campaigning for better school dinners since 2001. As well as driving up standards of food in schools, with a Catering Mark to sign up to, the partnership also educates on cooking and growing food. Currently 20 per cent of schools have

signed up to the Catering Mark.

According to Amy Leech, senior policy advisor at The Soil Association, independent evaluation of Food for Life saw a 28 per cent increase in primary schoolchildren eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. "Working with schoolchildren is incredibly important," says Leech. "The habits we form in our youth stay with us for life."

It's encouraging to see that school meals are high on the government's agenda, with the implementation of the School Food Plan, including plans to offer universal free school meals to infants coming into effect from September. Now The Soil Association is aiming to tackle hospital food.

"We think that the health sector should be setting an example," says Leech. "Especially as good nutrition aids patient recovery."



PHOTOS: TRACES ESPAGNE

Science centres across Europe are exploring food issues with young people





Ukactive CEO Dave Stalker thinks that the focus should move from obesity to inactivity

HEALTH CLUBS

Dave Stalker, CEO of ukactive, argues that there needs to be more emphasis on getting people moving, since being physically active can lessen the chances of serious illness in overweight and obese people.

"Obesity is the loud, out there issue, but inactivity is the silent killer," he says. "Obesity will only be truly tackled when the food manufacturers reduce the sugar and fat content in food, so ukactive wants to move away from the obesity debate and engage in a debate on physical inactivity."

According to ukactive, one quarter of the UK population are physically inactive and this costs £20bn in public health funding each year. "Focusing on physical inactivity would have a knock on effect on obesity. It would save the NHS and the health of the nation. You can be fat, but still be fit," says Stalker.

Ukactive would like to see a rebalancing of public health spending, so that more is invested in promoting physical activity. "Our dream would be for there to be a fitness or community exercise professional in each GP surgery counselling people to become more active," says Stalker. This approach has proved successful in a programme piloted by ukactive in Essex (see Let's Get Moving boxout, above right).



LET'S GET MOVING

ukactive has piloted a programme, Let's Get Moving, which is aimed at previously inactive people in danger of developing chronic diseases related to their lifestyle choices.

Funded by Sport England and supported by local authority public health teams, the programme's aim is to create a pathway for sustainable involvement in sport and physical activity for those who are currently inactive.

The pilot was carried out with a consortium of partners with five Primary Care Trusts in Essex. It saw 504 participants amass a total of 48,000 active hours, walking 69,000 miles.

Let's Get Moving uses a GP referral model based on motivational interviewing techniques designed to elicit information on the basis of which the patient can be referred to a qualified exercise professional for a fully supported programme.

In the coming months, additional funding will come from Nesta, enabling the incorporation of a peer-to-peer element, which will involve patients being mentored by a trained volunteer and introduced to a network of peer supporters. The programme will also go to new areas, starting with Essex County Council and rolling out more broadly.

SLEEP EXPERTS

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest sleep deprivation can lead to obesity (see boxout, opposite page). Several theories have been mooted as to why. Sleep-deprived people may be too tired to exercise, or they might eat more as they're awake longer and snack at night. Also lack of sleep disrupts the balance of key hormones that control appetite, so sleep-deprived people may be hungrier than those who get enough rest at night.

So should governments be increasing awareness about the benefits of a good night's sleep? And should there

be more health interventions to help those who have difficulty sleeping?

Sleep psychologist, Dr Andrew Mayers, says he would like all GPs to be trained in sleep-related issues, or be able to refer people on to someone who is. "This area of mental health is undervalued and has received a disproportionate amount of cuts," he says.

Privately-run sleep initiatives are springing up and it's likely the sleep industry will start to grow as part of the wellness industry. London already has a Sleep School and hospitality operators are beginning to offer retreats aimed at insomniacs, for example the Deep Sleep Retreat at Grayshott Spa in Surrey, UK.



Evidence suggests that sleep disruption can lead to weight gain and obesity

A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

A study funded by cancer charities and carried out by the University of Oxford has found a link between light levels in women's rooms at night and their weight. Researchers speculated that melatonin might play a role, as it's a hormone whose production is inhibited by exposure to light and is thought to play a role in metabolism.

A study funded by the American Diabetes Association at Temple's

Center for Obesity Research and Education in the US looked at the impact of sleep on children's eating behaviours. When the children taking part in the study slept more, they consumed an average of 134 calories less per day, weighed half a pound less and had lower fasting levels of leptin – a hunger-regulating hormone which is highly correlated with the amount of adipose tissue – when compared to results monitored

in a week when they had less sleep.

A study at Massachusetts General Hospital for Children analysed data from 1,046 children over a number of years by interviewing their mothers about their sleep patterns and, at the age of seven, measured their height and weight, lean body mass, waist and hip circumference, total body fat and abdominal fat. Researchers found an association between sleep curtailment and obesity.

PARKS

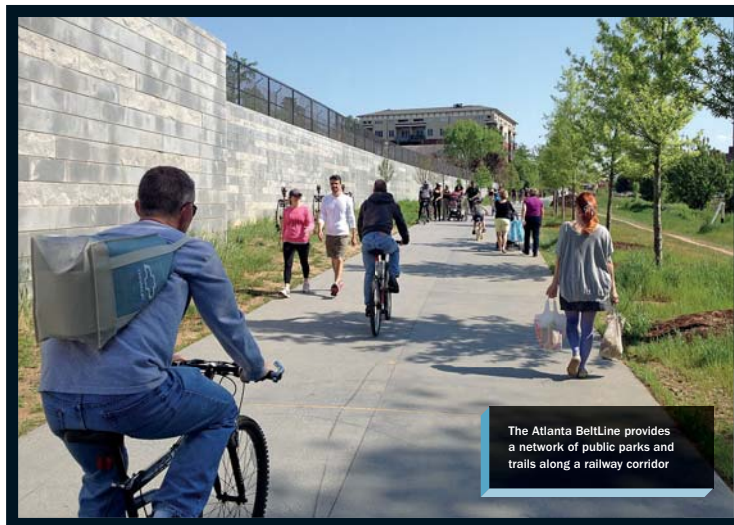
One of the reasons people have difficulty sleeping is because of stress, and this can also lead to weight gain. The stress hormone, cortisol, causes an increase in appetite and when we're stressed we're more likely to reach for high calorific comfort foods.

"One of the cures for stress is to eat sugar and fat: the body is designed to crave this, as it gives energy quickly," says Dr William Bird, founder of Intelligent Health. "When we were hunter gatherers, in times of stress, conflict and famine we would crave fat. When you are stressed you become

less active and eat the wrong things."

Bird believes that a three-pronged approach is needed to tackle this issue: environment, community and purpose. He says the environment we live in has a great deal to do with our weight, stress and activity levels. "The more deprived the neighbourhood you live in, the more stressed you will be," he says. "That's why there are high levels of obesity and inactivity in areas of deprivation. Green space offsets that stress, so if you live near a park or visit a green space regularly, it has been shown to increase your life expectancy because your stress levels drop and then your habits change: you become more active and eat better."





The Atlanta BeltLine provides a network of public parks and trails along a railway corridor

“The infrastructure we build really matters to the kind of lives we lead. If all we build is highways then we’ll continue to get a very spread-out separated, car-dependant lifestyle”



The BeltLine was first conceived in a 1999 master's thesis by a student

URBAN PLANNING

Ryan Gravel, senior urban designer at US architectural practice Perkins + Will believes environment plays a key role in health. He came up with the idea for the Atlanta BeltLine Corridor, a 22 mile loop of green trails made out of old railway lines, around Atlanta, US. The trails link 45 neighbourhoods and have 100,000 people within walking distance of them. It has proved to be a magnet for exercise and active commuting.

“The infrastructure we build really matters,” says Gravel. “If we build sidewalks and greenways and public transit networks, then the market responds with compact, walkable urban districts. If all we build is highways then we’ll continue to get a very spread-out, separated, car-dependent lifestyle. Car-dependency clearly has negative impacts on public health so at a minimum we should stop incentivising and even subsidising it.”

Perkins + Will are consulting on more than 30 similar projects around the world. Find out more: beltline.org



BARIATRIC SURGERY

Inserting a gastric band to inhibit appetite and reduce food consumption has become a mainstream solution since it was recognised by NICE in 2002.

The NHS has a framework whereby people are assessed to show they are committed to change and then have to engage in a year long programme before surgery. Even then, however, it can be difficult to assess who'll do well and who won't, according to consultant bariatric surgeon at Nuffield Health Leeds hospital, Simon Baxter.

"It's not a magic bullet, but it can kickstart a healthy lifestyle. The benefits last for around three months, so people have to change their lifestyles to receive long term weightloss and health benefits," says Baxter.

Studies show bariatric procedures cause significant long-term loss of weight, recovery in diabetes, improvement in cardiovascular risk factors and a reduction in mortality of 23 per cent from 40 per cent.

Baxter says studies are showing bariatric surgery shows a rapid return on healthcare costs. "If someone has

a co-morbidity, such as diabetes, it can be cheaper to operate on them than pay for the ongoing medical support," he says. "The other thing is that severely obese people often don't work, whereas after surgery they may go back to meaningful work, pay taxes and contribute to the economy."

While it can help, Baxter adds that this approach is only scratching the surface of the problem of obesity.

Medication

Obesity medication can lessen appetite, make people feel full sooner, or making it harder for the body to absorb the fat from food. However, the drugs have some undesirable side effects, including stomach pain, diarrhoea, constipation, headaches, dizziness and insomnia. The chance that the side effects may outweigh the benefits is of great concern and they are only prescribed for serious health issues.

However, if a pill could be found that was effective in bringing about weight loss without side effects, it could provide a solution which most people and GPs would prefer to use.

Surgery and medication are used only in cases where people are suffering severe health issues

Whatever the answer, the clock is ticking. Food and drinks companies will continue to keep pumping glucose syrup into products until governments find they are spending more on treating obesity than they recoup from taxes and other economic benefits from these companies. Nations will continue to get fatter and health services will find it increasingly difficult to cope.

In the meantime, any help in terms of education and the promotion of healthy lifestyles is of value, as many people are worryingly ignorant about the causes and dangers of obesity. According to research by Nuffield Health, which questioned 3,100 UK adults, many obese people think they are just overweight and don't realise they're putting their health at risk. Of those questioned, 44 per cent said they had no concerns that they were putting themselves at risk of serious illness or premature death as a result of their weight issues. ●



A PALL MALL PALACE

**Founded in 1836 as the HQ for the Liberal Party, London's Reform Club
has hosted everyone from Princess Diana to Gorbachev. Grahame Senior
finds out how the private members' club is moving with the times**

You could say it all started with Michelangelo. His magnificent Farnese Palace in Rome was the inspiration for architect Charles Barry's stunning interpretation of Renaissance style and while the Farnese Palace has since been transformed into the French Embassy, the Reform Club is still housed in the splendid building – completed in 1841 – which it commissioned from Barry.

Like the Renaissance palazzos on which it was modelled, 104 Pall Mall looks austere from the outside. Enter those unmarked doors, however, and you're transported to an environment of exquisite refinement and aesthetic stimulation. Everything about this wonderful interior is designed to soothe the soul and excite the senses.

The job of the main atrium is like that of any grand palace – to create a sense of awe and grandeur. Walking into its full-height space and gazing up to the sky glistening through a thousand lead-crystal lozenges of the roof high above definitely delivers the wow factor. As befits a palace, the interior is flamboyant, with walls and columns in marble and scagliola interspersed with huge portraits and massive mirrors all adding to the impression of light and scale and space.

It's a statement building – just as important in its day as the Shard today. It speaks of power and confidence.

More than a magnificent building

The Reform Club is one of the longest established institutions on Pall Mall. From the very beginning it was revolutionary in concept and radical



The Reform Club architect, Charles Barry, was inspired by the Renaissance palazzos that he visited as a student in Rome

in execution. It was founded in 1836 by Edward Ellice, the Whig Whip who secured the successful progress through Parliament of the Reform Act of 1832 – after which the Club is named. His fortune was based on the Hudson's Bay Company which was at that time at its zenith and he had the wealth and influence to inspire the 'new men' of the era. This was the time of the changing of the guard between the Old Whig aristocracy and the new liberal thinkers – the coming men. In effect they were not really welcome at London's more traditional

Brooks's Club, so Ellice and his colleagues resolved to create a new and much bigger club for themselves.

The mission was to promote liberal and progressive thought and enable the 'social intercourse of the reformers'. Like all such clubs, the Reform was founded for the benefit of its members and is run for that purpose today. Membership now is not specific to any party or political persuasion (the liberals moved out and on to the National Liberal Club in 1882).

The Reform is open to those who want to escape from the constraints of any particular political adherence. Paradoxically enough, the Reform was born at a time of coalition between the Whigs (later to be overtaken by the Liberals) and the Tories. That relationship had much the same unease about it as the UK's current



The main atrium rises the full height of the building and features a mosaic pavement bearing an Etruscan design

In an uncertain and rapidly changing world, how does an organisation as seemingly traditional and rooted in history as the Reform Club face up to the challenges of the future?

coalition between Conservatives and Liberals. Plus ça change...

The Reform was originally housed in Elice's own house while its purpose-built new premises were being created on Pall Mall. From the start it had one straightforward objective – to make the members feel instantly at home and the Reform Club – to this day – has the mission statement of being 'a home from home' for its members.

It was all about the food

We tend to think celebrity chefs were invented in the current tv era – but the Reform Club got there first!

From the very beginning the club had a strong focus on food. Long before Gordon Ramsay and Heston Blumenthal were feted as celebrity chefs or enfants terribles there was Alexis Benoit Soyer. This French chef fled the terror of revolutionary France

and settled in London to become the most celebrated cook in the land.

He was a revolutionary thinker about food – and a technical innovator. Together with Charles Barry, he designed the Reform Club kitchens with so many new features (refrigerators, gas cooking, adjustable ovens) that public tours of the facilities had to be arranged. On the date of Queen Victoria's Coronation in 1838, the club served breakfast for 2,000 guests.

He used the theatrical stage of the Reform Club to perfect his talents and to offer a style of dining as revolutionary in its day as Blumenthal's cooking is today. One signature dish – Lamb Cutlets Reform – survives on the menu to this day and is one of the few recipes from club land that has achieved worldwide recognition.

He had the same understanding of PR as many celebrities today, even

opening an art gallery with all proceeds being donated to feed the poor.

Still open to radical ideas

In recent years, of course, clubs have changed from the weekday city refuge of country gentlemen into an environment much more connected with the contemporary world. The Reform has always been at the forefront of change and was one of the earliest clubs to welcome women as full members 27 years ago. Today, of the total membership of 2,500, 461 are women.

It has an eclectic membership and hosts a range of guests as diverse as modern society itself. Princess Diana lunched several times, The Iron Lady hosted Gorbachev here and Tina Turner chose it for her birthday party. Famous as a venue for films (particularly Spy Films like *Die Another Day*) it was the real life haunt of Burgess and Blunt and their co-conspirators.

Home from home for the members

The two upper stories of the palace are reserved for 'chambers'; these delightful rooms are furnished in a traditional style but with all the conveniences expected of a modern establishment. What is distinctly un-modern, however, is the price, which is roughly a third to a quarter of that charged by comparable hotels in London's West End.

Deputy secretary, Ian Kenworthy, has been at the forefront of trying to move forward bedroom occupancy at the weekend when clubs are traditionally either closed or quiet. The latest initiative offers a discount of approximately 50 per cent on the weekday rate for occupancy on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays and this has led to a



(Left) A portrait of legendary Reform Club chef Alexis Soyer, who modernised the kitchens and introduced a new style of dining



(Top left) The dining rooms overlook the private gardens (top right). The atrium houses portraits and busts of the 'reformers'

big increase in the number of week-end events which the club now hosts. There's a range of entertaining facilities stretching from the top secret Cabinet Room, which is accessed through a hidden door in the panelling off the main dining room, to the grandeur of the Library, which covers one whole side of the building on the first floor and comfortably seats 120 for dinner.

One of the most surprising aspects of the club is the fact that it has large private gardens (which are shared with the Travellers' Club next door) in the heart of Carlton Gardens, so Reform Club members can enjoy alfresco dining under some of the finest London plane trees still standing.

A palace of all the pleasures

An organisation like the Reform Club is not just about hospitality. It provides sustenance of other kinds and the twin glories of the Reform are its magnificent collection of books and its unrivalled range of societies.

The Library was established by Panizzi who became principal librarian to the British Museum. From the start it was designed to be a world-class collection with a focus on 19th century literature, politics and political reform. Today it houses 75,000 volumes.

The societies range from bridge and drawing through economics to Cryptos – which specialises in military history. It's a club which offers scope and stimulation for all interests and the company of like-minded 'seekers after truth'.

Embracing the future

In an uncertain and rapidly changing world, how does an organisation as seemingly traditional and rooted in history as the Reform face up to the challenge of the future?

In a word, vision.

Ask deputy secretary Ian Kenworthy what is the biggest change in the club this century and he volunteers, "It is totally transformed. The relationship between the staff and the members is completely different today from the way it was when I started working here 22 years ago.

"There's much more of a sense of egalitarianism and a feeling that we're all part of one community. The staff value the members and the

members value the staff because they're both working to keep something special alive and vigorous."

The social values and customs of the wider world have changed hugely and the Reform has kept pace with them. Some specific developments envisaged over the coming years include the greater use of the club at weekends, and a strategy to ensure it's used more for family celebrations (rules are relaxed and children are also welcomed at weekends).

Afternoon tea

Along with the entire London market, the Reform Club is also sensitive to the downward shift in demand for lunch which the capital is experiencing. This is being countered by the rapid growth in demand for afternoon tea and specific plans are now in place to take advantage of this trend.

The Reform will always be focused on its members and their lifestyle choices. At the same time, it's sensitive to the demands of new market groups and is catering for a younger and more eclectic clientele. The club – in short – is committed to keeping up with social and commercial trends.

And it has also kept a firm hold on its magnificent palace on Pall Mall. ●

LEISURE DIRECTORY

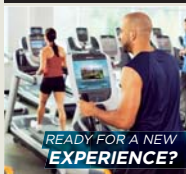
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SHEILA JOHNSON

The US Salamander Resort and Spa, owned by film producer Sheila Johnson, is fuelled by equestrian passion and business ambition, but has wellness at its heart

Tucked away in a quiet corner of America's horse country, Salamander Resort & Spa near Middleburg, Virginia, has an illustrious history. In the early 60s, the small town was the beloved retreat of president John F Kennedy and his First Lady, who spent hours riding on the land where the property now stands.

So when Sheila C Johnson – co-founder of Black Entertainment Television (BET) and executive producer of recent Hollywood smash-hit *The Butler* – first moved to Middleburg in 1996, she became just one in a long list of powerful people to be drawn to the area. The entrepreneur bought Salamander Farms, a sprawling estate just outside the town, and transformed it into a family home-come-equestrian paradise.

Eighteen years later, Johnson uses the estate as a base of operations for her own personal passion: Salamander Hotels & Resorts.

Salamander is a chain of luxury properties of which the Middleburg property – unveiled in October 2013 – is the fourth to open.

ICONIC RETREAT

One of the only luxury resorts to open in the US last year, the project has been a long time in the works. It was in 2003 that a 340-acre (138-hectare) tract of land came up for sale just a few miles from Salamander Farms, and Johnson immediately knew what she had to do. "From the moment I stepped foot on this serene land over 10 years ago, I fell in love with it and envisioned creating an iconic retreat," she said at the grand opening.

From the outset, the property was always going to incorporate a world-class equestrian facility. But unlike many resorts, where the '...and spa' adjunct is exactly that, for Johnson it was the spa that was a driving force.



The resort offers a Yoga on Horseback course

Bringing together a team of designers that included Thomas Pheasant, WATG and Blu Spas, Johnson's vision was to integrate spa and wellness into the fabric of the resort.

AMERICAN CLASSIC

From a commercial perspective, the Salamander Resort & Spa couldn't be better positioned. In addition to being the country's unofficial equestrian capital, Middleburg is also an hour's drive from DC and 35 minutes from Dulles International Airport, making it accessible to foreign travellers.

The spa offers a wide range of massage and beauty treatments and features wet areas, comprising whirlpools with waterfall features, steamrooms and experience showers. Separately, there's a relaxation area and Rasul, plus a fitness centre, sauna and an indoor swimming pool.

But in line with Johnson's vision, the wellness offering extends far beyond the walls of the spa. At its heart is the equestrian centre, which alongside riding classes offers a range of well-

ness-orientated programmes, including The Equi-Spective Experience – which aims to help participants discover their authentic communication style by connecting with horses – and Yoga on Horseback. Next on the agenda is the opening of a treetop canopy walkway and an open-air treatment room, but Johnson also has bigger plans. These include a dedicated healthcare facility – scheduled to open towards the end of the year – delivered in partnership with a leading medical provider.

Nor does it end here. With two brand new Salamander resorts soon to be announced – one in Florida and one in North Carolina – Johnson's wellness ambitions are only just beginning.

"As Salamander expands, our expertise in the spa industry will be a key part of the company's growth strategy," she says. "Never has it been more essential to marry health and wellness to a resort experience. We are perfectly positioned to help owners create that environment." ●
This article was first published in Spa Business, Issue 2, 2014

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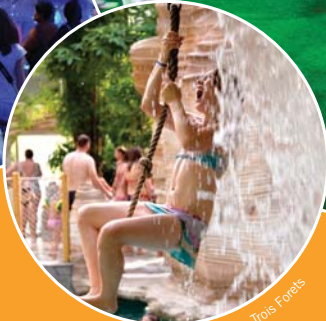
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