

# LUXURY HOT SPOTS

• 2nd Quarter  
2017

CELEBRITY

**JOAN  
SMALLS**

APPOINTED W HOTEL'S  
GLOBAL FASHION INNOVATOR

**HOW TO  
FEED YOUR  
MILLENNIAL**



A PERSONAL  
“WOW”  
STORY

**TECHNOLOGY TRENDS  
(RE)SHAPING THE  
TRAVEL INDUSTRY**

CHANGING THE FACE OF  
**FUTURE HR**  
THROUGH STRATEGY



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*Luxury Hoteliers magazine is a collaborative venture with the International Luxury Hotel Association's dynamic community of hospitality professionals interested in sharing their incredible knowledge of trends, industry intelligence and inspiration.*



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# SPOTLIGHT ON

**William Haandrikman**

*General Manager Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit*

*By Scott Resch*

Twenty-five years ago, William Haandrikman was a hotel school graduate from The Netherlands looking for a job in the hospitality industry. He found one with AccorHotels, and has never looked back. haandrikman has climbed the ladder of hotel chain's ranks, largely by elevating the profile of each property he has worked at. The Dutch national has managed Sofitels in The Hague, Paris, Vienna, Shanghai and, most recently, Bangkok. In April, Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit will celebrate its fifth anniversary.

At that age, most hotels have usually lost their luster. But thanks to Haandrikman, the brand's flagship hotel in Southeast Asia has become a shining example of how a luxury hotel can compete well past its infancy.

### **YOU'VE BEEN AT SOFTEL BANGKOK SUKHUMVIT FOR THREE YEARS NOW. WHAT HAS BEEN THE GREATEST CHALLENGE DURING YOUR TIME SO FAR?**

Well, when I first got here, there were protests going on all over the city. In 2015, there was an attack on the Erawan Shrine. And last year, there were several events that caused setbacks from a tourism perspective.

But what I've found each time is that, after everything settled back down, we could increase guest satisfaction and the average rate. Even during difficult times, our staff -- or ambassadors, as we call them -- find a way to bring the quality level up another notch, which is ultimately what positions a hotel in the marketplace. I think we're in a great place right now, but it is only the beginning.

### **HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE NEXT FIVE YEARS PLAY OUT?**

It will always be challenging. Next year, for example, there will be 4,500

more rooms in the city. Bangkok is still booming. What I really want to do is take the hotel to the next level when it comes to price positioning. In Bangkok, the price is low but the quality is high. We need to grow the average rate by improving our guest experience and reputation as the leading five-star hotel.

But you can't drive rates if the quality is not there. You've got to constantly taking into account guest experience. People need to feel welcome, feel at home, feel recognized. First-time guests, they need to feel "this is where

### **THE TYPE OF CUSTOMER THAT COMES THROUGH THE DOORS NOW VERSUS WHEN THE HOTEL FIRST OPENED?**

I have. We've had to adapt to a new kind of guest. There are more leisure guests because of the vibrant development in the Sukhumvit area. We get a lot more guests from other parts of Asia, such as Korea, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong. Oh, and China, of course. Bangkok welcomes more tourists from China now than anywhere else. That wasn't the case when I first got here.



I belong."

A couple years ago, when business was down, everyone lowered rates. But this has stopped and everyone is optimistic about the future.

I think we have successfully added value and the quality of experience is reflected by our online reputation and guest reviews. We focus on our guests first and procedure second. We ask, "What does the guest want?" and then adapt the procedures accordingly.

### **HAVE YOU SEEN A SHIFT IN**

### **YOU'VE BEEN WITH ACCOR ALMOST 25 YEARS. DID YOU EVER IMAGINE YOU WOULD BE WITH ONE COMPANY FOR THAT LONG?**

No, I didn't. But I don't feel like it's been 25 years. Every three or four years, it seems, I've gone to a different hotel, a different country, and continent. It's nice because variety is the spice of life. You get to experience a different way of thinking in each place but the standards and processes remain the same.





*Voila*

local network that might be able to accommodate you.

### WHAT HAS KEPT YOU WITH ACCOR FOR SO LONG?

Support. I'm approached quite often (by other hotel chains) because of my international experience in luxury hotels. Most big chains are interested in this kind of profile for executive roles. But, fortunately, AccorHotels has always offered me the right job at right time. That's why I remain loyal.

This year is shaping up to be a big one for the hotel. You are revamping the lobby in order to link up with the BTS SkyTrain, and you're teaming up with Diageo to develop the first 'World Class Bar.' How do you see those things changing the complexion of the hotel?

L'Appart is a successful rooftop bar and restaurant, but what we've found is that people come to see the views,



*Sukhumvit - Lobby*

My personal journey with AccorHotels also shows our ambassadors that you can grow within the group. That's a nice role to be in. When a new ambassador starts, I always welcome them on the first day, and they always ask how long I've been with the company and I enjoy sharing my own stories and career path.

As the GM, I think it's important to help our ambassadors to grow in their

careers. The GMs I worked for did it for me. It's a powerful inspirational tool and it's really the strength of AccorHotels. We often share talents across our network locally and internationally. Here in Thailand, AccorHotels has 76 hotels. So if for instance, you're looking for a particular opportunity that does not exist at your chosen hotel, there are 75 other properties within the



which are not maximized by the current layout. We plan to reposition the venue by redesigning it and having food supplement beverage, not the other way around.

Right now, L'Appart has a homey ambiance with a touch of French flair. It's meant to feel like a friend's extravagant, Parisian apartment. We're not going to change that. We're just going to enhance the experience and create a better space inside and out, so people can relax and have a great time in a really chic environment.

It's going to be big for us. There are only going to be 10 'World Class Bars' around the world. Ours will be the first and the only one in Bangkok.

World Class Bar is a concept from Diageo whereby they train people to be top bartenders and hold international contests for them to showcase their skills. The cocktail competition has developed into an iconic bar concept. In the past, the chef was the most important person in the restaurant. But with this concept, the bartender takes center stage.

It's what guests want -- a bartender with a story and personal flair, who can talk about spirits and their new creations. We want to wow and educate our guests and to influence the drinking culture. In Bangkok, you have cocktail bars everywhere, but to focus on the bar, and get celebrity bartenders from all around the world, you can really deliver a unique experience.

With World Class Bar, we'll be able to create a new wave of gourmet drinking, as we have seen in gourmet dining. This will not only drive experience in our venue but also in the home of our

guests. We think we have a winning formula.

### AND LINKING TO THE BTS SKYTRAIN? HOW WILL THAT CHANGE THE GAME?

I think that will help us a lot. The connection will be at the mezzanine level, where Voila, our all-day dining venue, is. We plan to take inspiration from leading hotels and bars from cities such as London, Paris, New York, and Las Vegas. As everyone knows, time is of the essence, and the easy access will give us a competitive edge on busy Sukhumvit road.



Luxury Club Millesime Room-King Bed



L'Appart

# MYAN

## NEW SANCTUM INLE RESORT UNVEILS 'WHEEL AND WINE' TOUR BY INLE LAKE

Unlike such icons as floating vegetable gardens, stilted wooden homes and Intha fishermen who propel their boats with a one-legged rowing style, Myanmar's Inle Lake region isn't famous for winemaking. Yet.

To give travelers a taste of Myanmar's budding wine industry, Sanctum Inle Resort has launched its 'Wheel and Wine: Cycling to Red Mountain Half-Day Tour' by bicycle to Red Mountain Estate, situated nearby in the undulating hills overlooking the storied lake.

The journey through spectacular countryside skirting Inle Lake starts at the resort, situated on the lake's banks. During the 40-minute ride to Red Mountain, guests pedal past sugar cane fields and through shady, sleepy villages including Maing Thauk, half of which is set on land while the other half sits on stilts over the water and is linked to the shore by a 400-metre wooden bridge.



# MAR'S

After a short uphill stretch, cyclists reach scenic Red Mountain, home to 400,000 plants imported from France and Spain after experiments determining what grapes would grow best in the area's soil and cooler climate. The estate produces a range of red, white, rose and fortified wines.

"'Wheel and Wine' is already proving

to be a huge hit with our guests, who are surprised to learn there is winemaking in Myanmar and that it's virtually on our doorstep," said Philippe Arnaud, the resort's general manager. "The vista that greets you at the estate reminds me of the Cape Wine route in South Africa. Red Mountain is ripe for exploration and

its terrace affords a spectacular view of the lake best enjoyed at sunset."

Opened in 2002, Red Mountain marks a collaboration between a local Pa-Oh and French vintner. Visitors are welcome to take a tour of the winemaking facilities before settling down at the hilltop restaurant for wine tasting.



**Red Mountain Estate Vineyard**



Red Mountain is one of only two wineries in Myanmar, both located in the Inle Lake region.

Mr. Arnaud said guests were free to undertake the tour either in the morning or afternoon, and could also cycle through nearby Nyaung Shwe, once the capital of a significant Shan kingdom known as the Saophas or “sky princes”.

The 94-room Sanctum Inle Resort is the first upscale hotel to come on-line at Inle Lake and officially debuted October last year.

For further information about the tour and the resort, please visit [www.sanctum-inle-resort.com](http://www.sanctum-inle-resort.com)



*Red Mountain Estate Wine*



*Picking Grapes*