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Rebecca and her husband Charlie enjoying time with their horses.

Meet the Visionaries

Dear Friends,

From a young age, my connection to luxury travel was deeply rooted in my upbringing. Growing up as the daughter of a dedicated hotelier, I had the unique opportunity to witness the intricate workings of the hospitality world firsthand. By the time I reached my teenage years, I had explored every aspect of luxury hotel operations, from housekeeping to managing the front desk. These formative experiences sparked an enduring passion for luxury travel, diverse experiences, and breathtaking destinations that remain at the core of who I am today and the worldview and enthusiasm I've brought to Rebecca Recommends.

Rebecca Recommends is celebrating its 20th anniversary and our passion is only growing. We continue to curate an exceptional client list, which features an intriguing blend of luxury hotels, residences, and exclusive destination specialists around the world. We partner with individuals and organizations that understand the true essence of service—placing care, attention, and exceeding expectations at the forefront of their work.

Another pillar of Rebecca Recommends these past two decades is the commitment to ethical travel. I hold a strong conviction that travelers wield significant power to uplift local communities, particularly in developing regions where tourism supports economies and livelihoods. By aligning our travel decisions with

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values such as human rights, environmental conservation, social welfare, and animal protection, we can contribute to meaningful change. I also have a deep appreciation for boutique operations—those smaller establishments where owners and managers are personally invested in their businesses, prioritizing care for their team and guests while planning for the future.

I am humbled and honored to work with true visionaries across the luxury travel space. You'll meet many of them below, those incredible individuals who enrich the industry through their joy and skill. You'll hear about The Torridon's Dan and Rohaise Rose-Bristow and Ashford Castle's Catherine Kenny, who infuse every aspect of the guest stay with a warm, heartfelt welcome. Learn of the masterful chefs who tell the story of a destination through traditional and inspired flavors, including Chef Alex Payne at Great Fosters Estate's Michelin-starred Tudor Pass restaurant. Meet champions of art and sustainability at Park Hotel Kenmare and The Hari. And discover the dedication to their beloved destination at Dinaric Adventures and Sea Song.

Here's to many more decades of inspiring a passion for meaningful travel while sharing the incredible destinations, services, and people that make this world so remarkable.

Fondly,

Rebecca



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Rohaise and Dan Rose-Bristow, Owners, The Torridon. Photo credit - Matt Buckley

[The Torridon, Wester Ross, Scotland](#) - Infusing Luxury with a Personal Touch

One of Scotland's last remaining independently owned five-star hotels, The Torridon has been in family ownership for 34 years. Throughout this time the resort has been on a journey of constant improvement and refinement and now holds the honor of Scotland's most northerly red five-star hotel.

Dan and Rohaise Rose-Bristow are the owners and are fully involved in the hotel. While Rohaise leads training and team development and hotel design, Dan oversees strategic developments and finance.

As well as constantly evolving and developing The Torridon, Dan and Rohaise have recently held influential positions in British hospitality with Dan chairing the Master Innholders and Luxury Scotland consortium, while Rohaise is on the board at Pride of Britain Hotels and Apprentice in Hospitality Scotland.



Rohaise and Dan's personal touch and core values have helped make Torridon what it is today. They have always been driven to be the best, passionate about making people feel special, daring to be different from others, and authentic in the way they live and work. This has ensured that the resort always offers a luxurious feeling of homeliness and a warm heartfelt welcome to all its guests.

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Malik J. Fernando, Chairman of Resplendent Ceylon

[Resplendent Ceylon, Sri Lanka](#) - Carrying Forward a Legacy of Service and Sustainability

Malik J. Fernando, Chairman of Resplendent Ceylon, carries forward a family legacy rooted in using business as a tool for human service. As the son of Merrill J. Fernando, founder of Dilmah Tea, Malik was raised with the belief that businesses should serve communities and protect the environment. This philosophy drives his approach to Resplendent Ceylon, a collection of luxury resorts that celebrate Sri Lanka's natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Malik's impact extends beyond his own brand. As the founder of the Sri Lanka Tourism Alliance, he plays a key role in uplifting the country's tourism industry. The Alliance fosters collaboration between stakeholders to promote sustainable tourism and improve the country's global tourism profile. Malik's leadership in this space reflects his deep commitment to building Sri Lanka's reputation as a world-class travel destination.

With plans to expand Resplendent Ceylon to the Cultural Triangle, Colombo, and the East Coast, Malik is dedicated to curating authentic and sustainable luxury experiences. This growth, while enhancing Sri Lanka's tourism offerings, also aims to benefit local communities. Through these efforts, Malik continues to champion his family's legacy of service while shaping the future of Sri Lanka's tourism industry.

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Sarah Farag and Stuart Rigg - Southern Crossings' Owners and Directors

[Southern Crossings, Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji](#) - Memory-Making Experiences Limited Only By the Imagination

Meet Sarah Farag and Stuart Rigg, Owners and Directors of Southern Crossings - leading luxury travel specialists for Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji. United by, and guided by, the company's mission "to enrich and inspire by creating extraordinary journeys," these visionaries behind the brand are also actively involved in the business—working together with their teams, in Auckland and in Sydney, respectively, to deliver innovative and one-of-a-kind experiences that are as restorative and rewarding for their destinations and local communities as they are for the travelers who enjoy them.

Between them, Sarah (Owner and Director, Southern Crossings New Zealand) and Stuart (Owner and Director, Southern Crossings Australia) have decades' of luxury travel industry experience. They are personally internationally recognized for their industry-leading destination expertise and unrivaled ability to access one-of-a-kind experiences—with Conde Nast Travel Specialist, Travel+Leisure A-List, Wendy Perrin WOW List, and Robb Report Travel Masters credentials to their names.

Surrounded by a team of equally dedicated and very talented local travel professionals—to whom Sarah and Stuart will also proudly attribute the company's success—Southern Crossings is also a preferred Virtuoso On-Site and invited Virtuoso Ultraluxe community partner, Signature Travel Network Destination Specialist, and Serandipians Preferred DMC. Living and working in their respective destinations, Sarah and Stuart recommend personally road-tested experiences and share their local insights generously. Their long

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industry-standing relationships open doors to special access and privileges, while their travelers also enjoy in-the-know and up-to-the-minute travel advice. Through Sarah and Stuart's local connections, from both within—and beyond—the traditional tourism industry, they work to curate exclusive experiences tailored to travelers' preferences and individual passions—from above and beyond ultraluxe experiences to hands-on conservation opportunities; from foraging with famous foodies; a hit of tennis with one of the greats of the game; a glass of wine shared with the winemaker straight from the barrel; a traditional art-masterclass with an engaging Indigenous elder; ethical (and bucket-list) encounters with the region's unique wildlife; or a one-of-a-kind pop-up wilderness tent with all the trimmings.

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Bryan Meehan, Owner of Park Hotel Kenmare

[Park Hotel Kenmare, County Kerry, Ireland](#) - Championing Heritage, Art, and Sustainability

Bryan Meehan is an Irish visionary who has lovingly restored the iconic Park Hotel Kenmare while balancing its 1897 heritage by placing his museum-quality contemporary art collection amongst the public spaces and rooms. In addition, he has opened the hotel up to the local community and is leading the drive towards more sustainability in Irish hospitality.

His food direction in the acclaimed restaurant, Landline, is focused on freshness and seasonality with ingredients supplied by local producers who care. The result is a more fresh, relevant Relais & Chateaux five-star experience.

His vision has enhanced the hotel's offering for guests, has filled the team and local community with pride, and has infused the hotel with the best in Irish hospitality.

Park Hotel Kenmare has been welcoming guests since 1897. Bryan, who was reared and educated in Ireland, has brought his vision, experience, and flair to Kenmare. The past 25 years of his life have been spent in consumer products such as the organic local markets, Fresh & Wild in London (now Whole Foods), and Nude Skincare, and more recently as owner and CEO of Blue Bottle Coffee in California.

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Sustainability and art are of particular interest to Bryan and his family. One of his projects in Ireland is stewarding the Ancient Irish Oakwood Rainforest located in Glengarriff, West Cork. Dromgarraiff Rainforest is a living rainforest that the family is currently taking care of and can now be accessed by Park Hotel guests. Since they arrived at Park Hotel Kenmare in 2023, owners Bryan and Tara Meehan have introduced an expansive collection of internationally celebrated art. Guests can now enjoy an exceptional collection of mixed-media art unique to the Park Hotel Kenmare. Artists such as Dorothy Cross, Sean Scully, Elizabeth Columba, Guggi, Theaster Gates, Park Seo Bo, and Andy Warhol are featured along the hotel's corridors and rooms, creating an exciting juxtaposition of modern art against an 1897 historic Irish hotel. In addition, guests enjoy daily art tours, so that anyone interested in hearing the story of the art and how it came to be at the hotel can learn more.

Park Hotel Kenmare is also proud to be the first outpost for Blue Bottle Coffee in Europe. Bryan's vision and injection of innovation in such a historic setting has created wonderful new experiences for guests and a real sense of community and sustainability is restored to the foundations of this 1897 hidden gem in County Kerry, Ireland.

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Chef Alex Payne is at the helm of Tudor Pass restaurant.

[Great Fosters Estate, Egham Surrey, England](#) - Discover Culinary Excellence with Chef Alex Payne

The Great Fosters Estate is a must-visit destination located just outside the Royal Borough of Windsor and less than an hour from London.

Within the historic hotel, the Michelin-starred Tudor Pass restaurant sets the tone for one's stay. At the helm is Chef Alex Payne, one of the youngest chefs to earn the coveted accolade, who has distinguished himself as a leader in hospitality. The Tudor Pass, famed for its unpretentious, warm welcome and intimate elegance, has just seven tables. Alex and his small, talented brigade, deliver and introduce dishes personally at the table with their "bring the pass to them" concept from the tasting-menu-only restaurant.



Alex's background includes working with culinary luminaries like Heston Blumenthal and Gordon Ramsay, where he honed his techniques and passion for culinary excellence. Enjoy dishes such as Orkney Hand-Dived Scallop with Kohlrabi and Gooseberry as well as Hereford Beef with Watercress Sarawak Pepper and Autumn Truffle. He blends traditional British and European flavors with modern techniques and his dedication to sustainability and sourcing ingredients from responsible suppliers as well as the estate gardens, enhances his reputation for thoughtful and impactful cuisine. Chef Payne has elevated The Tudor Pass into one of the UK's top dining destinations, securing his place as a pioneering figure in the world of hospitality and fine dining.

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Tshepo Phokoje, Xigera Safari Lodge Guide

[Xigera Safari Lodge, Moremi Game Reserve, Botswana](#) - Elevating Guest Experiences with Conservation and Culture

Tshepo Phokoje, one of Xigera Safari Lodge's newest guides, brings an extraordinary depth of expertise and passion to every guest experience. With a background in photography and filmmaking, Tshepo's career has centered on raising awareness around conservation, human-wildlife co-existence, and Botswana's diverse cultural heritage. At Xigera, this translates into a guiding approach that not only illuminates the area's stunning landscapes but inspires guests to engage more deeply with the beauty and complexity of Botswana's wilderness.

Beyond her role as a guide, Tshepo is a celebrated artist, holding two solo exhibitions and founding the Annual Vixen Photography Exhibition. This platform has allowed her to further highlight themes of conservation and culture, drawing attention to Botswana's natural splendor and the importance of protecting it. Her impressive contributions have recently earned her a nomination for the 2024 Women's Awards Botswana as Best Woman in Tourism & Hospitality.

Tshepo's presence at Xigera is a unique asset for our guests. Her passion for conservation and commitment to sustainable tourism provide a compelling narrative that enhances the lodge experience. Guests have the chance to explore Botswana's wild landscapes with a guide who not only knows them intimately but is dedicated to ensuring their preservation for future generations. Tshepo exemplifies the ethos of Xigera Safari Lodge—an immersive, sustainable luxury experience in the heart of Botswana.

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Armen Kazazian, Owner, Kazazian Cruises

[Kazazian Cruises, Nile River, Egypt](#) - Redefining Luxury Travel on the Nile River

At just 30 years old, Armen Kazazian has revolutionized luxury travel on Egypt's Nile River. His journey began with a deep fascination for the Nile's history and potential. While studying its flow and the cultural heartbeat of Egypt, Armen uncovered a gap in the market: there were no true luxury boats catering to the world's most discerning travelers—wealthy elites and ultra-wealthy billionaires seeking bespoke experiences in Egypt.

Drawing inspiration from his father, whose legacy in hospitality shaped Armen's vision, Kazazian set out to redefine the Nile experience. His passion and determination birthed Kazazian Cruises, where opulent design meets unparalleled service. Under his leadership, the company has transformed the perception of Nile cruises, making it a must-visit destination for luxury travelers worldwide.

Kazazian Cruises isn't just about luxury—it's a commitment to sustainability and preserving Egypt's heritage, and Armen is elevating the Nile into a global symbol of luxury and cultural preservation. His pioneering work is a testament to the power of vision and passion.

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Vasilis Sarmentos and Seetha Ramanathan, Co-Founders, Curated Greece

[Curated Greece](#) - Meet Vasilis & Seetha, the Visionaries Behind Curated Greece

Curated Greece is the creation of Vasilis and Seetha, life partners united by a love for Greece and a shared dedication to unveiling its beauty to the world. Driven to explore every hidden corner of Greece, they set out to make Curated Greece a place where travelers can create lifelong memories, in a truly personal way. Their vision is rooted in the art of personalization and the belief that to fully experience Greece, one must immerse oneself in its vibrant culture, gastronomy, people, and breathtaking landscapes.



Vasilis, a Greek by birth and at heart, started his career in business but was soon drawn to travel, eager to share the authentic beauty of his homeland. His dream was to offer travelers a genuine glimpse into Greece's heart and soul. Seetha, born in California to Indian parents and raised in the US, has lived in numerous countries and traveled to over 50. Whether backpacking or embracing luxury, her adventurous spirit has taken her far and wide, yet Greece captured her heart and soon became her home. The journey of Curated Greece has been shaped with love and purpose, from its inception to its continued growth, built upon a deep understanding of the luxury of choice, personal preference, and shared expertise of the destination. Together with their

handpicked, hardworking team of expert travel curators, Curated Greece thrives in creating unforgettable memories and authentic experiences.

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Karen Fedorko Sefer, Founder of Sea Song Tours

[Sea Song, Türkiye](#) - Your Partner in Türkiye

Karen Fedorko Sefer founded Sea Song Tours in 2000 and going into 2025, will celebrate 25 years in the travel business. Karen had a successful career in the fashion business and came to Türkiye to be with her husband-to-be. After leaving her career and evaluating the opportunities in Türkiye, she decided to open a luxury travel business to fill in the gap that was missing at the time. Joining Virtuoso in 2006 was a highlight and brought wonderful advisors to her new project and insightful people who wanted to be a part of this dream. Sea Song is now one of the most important luxury travel companies in Türkiye and they continue to service high-touch clients and send them on amazing journeys throughout Türkiye.

“The success of Sea Song is so rewarding, and I look forward to more chapters in the growth of this business,” says Karen.

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Catherine Kenny, Rooms Division Manager, Ashford Castle

[Ashford Castle, County Mayo, Ireland](#) - A Legacy of Excellence in Luxury Hospitality

For more than 25 years, Catherine Kenny, Rooms Division Manager at Ashford Castle, has been a dedicated presence at this iconic estate. Catherine's love for hospitality began early, working in her family's hotel and studying hotel management before joining Ashford Castle's Front of House team as a receptionist. From her very first day, she was captivated by the Castle's grandeur and the unique legacy it represents in Irish luxury hospitality.

Today, Catherine is renowned as a true expert in hospitality. She collaborates closely with the accommodation team, thoughtfully creating unique turndown surprises and a warm, inviting atmosphere in each of Ashford's exquisite rooms. Her attention to detail and deep understanding of guest needs ensures that a stay at Forbes Five-Star Ashford Castle is truly exceptional. With her personal touches, Catherine has a reputation for making each visit unforgettable, allowing the Castle to feel like a welcoming "home away from home" for every guest.

Catherine's career is marked by unforgettable experiences, including coordinating the weddings of actor Pierce Brosnan and, later, golfer Rory McIlroy. These high-profile events showcase her dedication to seamless, heartfelt hospitality, with teamwork and meticulous planning evident from morning briefings with colleagues to every thoughtful guest interaction. Through her commitment and expertise, Catherine ensures that Ashford Castle remains not only a luxury destination but a place where warmth and care defines the guest experience.

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Tom Coward, Gravetye Manor Head Gardener

[Gravetye Manor, Sussex, England](#) - Revitalizing Historic Gardens with a Modern Touch

Head Gardener Tom Coward has been developing the historic gardens at Gravetye Manor, East Sussex, created by the 19th-century “wild gardening enthusiast” William Robinson, over the last 14 years. In his words:

“As a hotel, the garden needs to look good every day, so we use successional planting and winter structure. We like to be experimental with color!

The diversity and balance of formality and wilder meadows and orchards are what I love the most, the garden is also the perfect size and scale. More than the detail, it’s the bigger picture I like, the way seasonal light affects our planting palette with softer colors suiting the intense summer sun.

William Robinson’s passion for the environment was so ahead of its time. And his interest in naturalistic planting is very relevant now, perhaps as a reaction to social media, and people needing to connect more with nature.



I am immensely proud of the team I have developed here and working with the owners, hotel team, and chef, making a garden that functions as an attraction for visitors but also is a private garden, a gardener’s test ground, and a writer’s garden. I enjoy seeing all these elements come together as a living heritage.”

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Daniel Richardson, Executive Head Chef, Hartwell House & Spa

[Hartwell House & Spa, Buckinghamshire, England](#) - The Dedicated Team Behind Memorable Experiences

At Hartwell House, it is the dedicated and passionate team that transforms every guest's stay into a memorable experience. While the charm of our historic house draws many, it is the staff's warmth, sincerity, and attention to detail that guests mention most in their feedback, praising their genuine care and exceptional service. Executive Head Chef, Daniel Richardson, who has been with the hotel for over 30 years, brings his culinary expertise to life with seasonal, local, and British menus that make dining at Hartwell a true highlight.



Meanwhile, award-winning Nicola Burton, AA Housekeeper of the Year 2023, and her team ensure every room is impeccably prepared, creating a peaceful haven for guests. The spa team provides moments of relaxation with tailored treatments designed to restore both body and mind. Behind the scenes, the events team works tirelessly to ensure that each celebration—whether a wedding, meeting or special occasion—runs seamlessly, making Hartwell the perfect venue for life's most important moments. Even the smallest details are expertly handled by a skilled maintenance team, who keep the estate in pristine condition, while the gardeners lovingly care for Hartwell's 90 acres of gardens and parkland.

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Sally Strange and Rosie Peattie, part of Dream Escape's Guest Experience team.

[Dream Escape, United Kingdom and Ireland](#) - Unrivaled Team Members Make Behind-the-Scenes Magic

Unique to Dream Escape and as part of their Guest Experience team is the in-house guiding team made up of Sally Strange and Rosie Peattie. Acting as Dream Escape's own Mary Poppins, they personally vet and handpick all guides according to the requirements of the clients and their briefs. This means the team is always on the ground testing and visiting new experiences and is constantly updated on new and exciting openings, happenings, and opportunities. Most importantly, the staff can listen and adapt to the changing requirements of your travelers.

The real fun begins when a traveler thinks they know a destination and Dream Escape takes the opportunity to take them on the truly exclusive visits that can only happen as a result of who they know and the relationships they have developed over many years. The team understands that the discerning visitor's greatest thrill is the ability to go "behind the scenes," to step through that door with a curator where others cannot follow.

Rosie and Sally are the best in their fields and the golden gems of Dream Escape. They even have their own back page feature, Rosemary and Sage in *Dream Escape Magazine*. Check it out [here](#).

Don't take our word for it ... "Without a doubt, what made all of it so special and unforgettable was having the true pleasure of having Sally Strange as our guide. She was truly incredible, so full of life, energy, and amazing historical knowledge. Anywhere we visited was extraordinary. Her sense of humor and fun personality made her extra special. Sally was a winner in every way." (Brownell)

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Ivan Eremut, Founder and CEO

[Dinaric Adventures, Croatia and Beyond](#) - Defining Experiential Travel

Meet Ivan, the charismatic CEO of Dinaric Adventures, whose heart belongs to the scenic Cetina River, his father's birthplace. With a kinesiology background, he merged his love for nature and sports into a career as an adventure guide, sharing joy with everyone who joins him. In 2015 Ivan bought his first raft and teamed up with like-minded friends to offer rafting and canyoning on the Cetina.

What started as friendly outings quickly attracted a growing crowd, with bookings spreading like wildfire. Over the next eight years, Ivan's team expanded, evolving from single-day trips to crafting unforgettable multi-day outdoor luxury adventures. After visiting numerous stunning locations, the team crafted multi-day programs that blend thrilling activities with unique experiences like local gastronomy, picnics in secluded coves, and wine tastings in picturesque vineyards.

For accommodation, Dinaric prefers to offer exceptional boutique hotels, glamping sites, treehouses, and even lighthouses. All this can surely embody the spirit of experiential travel.

With years of experience and a personalized approach to each guest, Dinaric has become a DMC that stands out from the crowd and is worthy of mention and cooperation. They take great pride in what they have accomplished and look forward to many more unforgettable adventures to come!

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Jeff Wielgopolan, left, Meadowood Napa Valley's Service Director, and Patrick Nayrolles, Meadowood Napa Valley's General Manager

[Meadood Napa Valley, California](#) - Elevating Service Excellence Through Forbes Expertise and Michelin Distinction

Did you know that Meadowood Napa Valley's Service Director, Jeff Wielgopolan, served for over 16 years as a hotel evaluator and trainer for Forbes Travel Guide, where he also pioneered the development of programs that today are used for training management and line staff at five-star hotels, restaurants, and spas around the globe? Having joined the Meadowood team in 2021, Jeff is responsible for maintaining a best-in-class, world-renowned experience for Meadowood's guests, members, and employees.

Meadood is a proud member of Relais & Châteaux; the recipient of two Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star Awards, for its hotel and spa (one of 70 properties in the world to have earned both distinctions); and is 1 of only 16 hotels in the United States to have been awarded 3 Keys from the Michelin Guide. The property takes pride in its people and their commitment to the highest standards of service, which Jeff embodies day in and day out, leading Meadowood's teams in maintaining a tradition of excellence.

Recently, Jeff was invited by Josiah Mackenzie to speak on Mackenzie's popular podcast, *Hospitality Daily*, to discuss what it takes to be a Forbes double Five-Star, Michelin 3-Key hotel.

We invite you to access the links below to tune in and join Jeff in this two-session series with *Hospitality Daily* as he explores the fundamentals of service in luxury hospitality and takes you through Meadowood's unique approach and distinctive ways when it comes to enhancing the experience for all its guests.

[Session 1](#)

[Session 2](#)

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Angella Montebello, Sustainability Manager, The Hari

[The Hari, London, England](#) - An Advocate for Sustainability

At The Hari, the staff is wholeheartedly committed to achieving environmental and social sustainability, demonstrated through the appointment of a dedicated Sustainability Manager, Angela Montebello. Since joining The Hari last year, Angela has achieved a considerable amount, from introducing sustainable in-room amenities and making the switch to biodegradable and FSC-certified key cards to fostering partnerships with philanthropic organizations such as The Born Free and Kensington and Chelsea Foundation.

Amongst the many incredible sustainability milestones Angela has reached, achieving Silver Certification from EarthCheck may be her very best to date. With more than 25 years in the market and a presence in over 80 countries, EarthCheck is the world's leading sustainable consulting and certification organization for the tourism and hospitality industry, where they rigorously assess various aspects of hotel operations and community engagement before awarding the certification. More recently, The Hari was recognized as the 7th Most Sustainable Hotel in the World, as awarded by TripAdvisor's Travelers' Choice Awards 2024, a significant accomplishment that would not have been possible without the crucial role Angela played, all of which are reasons she is The Hari's unsung hero.

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Dalené Claassens, Director of Hotel and Hospitality, Babylonstoren

[Babylonstoren, Franschhoek Wine Valley, South Africa](#) - Meet the Heart of the Farm, the People Who Make Every Stay Unforgettable

Babylonstoren in the Cape Winelands of South Africa is not what you'd expect from the country's #1 hotel (as voted by *Condé Nast Traveler* US readers in the 2024 [Readers' Choice Awards](#)). It redefines the notion of comfort. At Babylonstoren Farm Hotel, a lack of pretension meets elegant luxury. Guests are treated like royalty while living close to the earth.

Director of Hotel and Hospitality Dalené Claassens loves Babylonstoren for its simplicity. "Our hotel invites guests to immerse themselves in the beauty of a working farm. The silence and beauty of the surroundings, the wholesome nature of our products, and the friendliness of our people—all work together to anchor our guests. They arrive as visitors and leave as family."

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Carlo Titus, Assistant Manager at Babylonstoren's Hotel Reception. Photo credit - Babylonstoren

Guests often remark that it is the people of Babylonstoren that make it a destination of desire. Carlo Titus, assistant manager at the hotel reception, has been part of the Babylonstoren hospitality team since 2013. "Every season brings new experiences," he says. "My mission is to ensure guests' recent visit is always their best. Then I know they'll come again. And next time, the bicycles their kids enjoyed will be lined up and ready, and their wine, a box of fresh fruit, and coffee waiting in the room ..."



*Lionel Adams, Reception Manager
Photo credit - Babylonstoren*

For Lionel Adams, the reception manager who has been with Babylonstoren for 14 years, the farm showcases South Africa's best. "For many people, Babylonstoren is either their first stop in our country or the last place they visit before they head home. We ensure that on this farm they see what South Africans are capable of."

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Jolene Plant, Director of Sales & Operations at Beyond Times Square

[Beyond Times Square, East Coast, United States](#) - A New Era of Personalized Travel Excellence

Beyond Times Square recently welcomed [Jolene Plant](#), a 15-year veteran of the travel industry, as their new Director of Sales & Operations. Below, Jolene shares her insights on the future of hospitality and Beyond Times Square's role as a leader in the field.

The future of tourism is centered on delivering customer-centric, highly personalized travel experiences tailored to each traveler's unique preferences. Beyond Times Square is proud to be at the heart of this transformation, guiding your clients through every step of their journey. From recommending hidden gems based on individual interests to arranging spontaneous upgrades and making real-time adjustments, their focus on personalization elevates the travel experience like never before.

While Beyond Times Square embraces the latest advancements in technology to customize each trip seamlessly, they are equally committed to maintaining the personal touch that makes the experience truly exceptional. A dedicated Experience Designers and Operations team ensures that every client has direct access to expert guidance, providing a human connection that enhances the journey from start to finish.

This new era of personalized, customer-focused travel turns vacations into deeply meaningful, one-of-a-kind experiences. Whether for leisure, adventure, or cultural exploration, travelers today seek authentic connections with the destinations they visit and [Beyond Times Square](#) is here to make that vision a reality on an unprecedented scale.

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Beyond Times Square (BTSQ) is a New York-based leading destination management company and tour operator that serves sophisticated individual and group travelers, delivering tailor-made, luxury travel programs with once-in-a-lifetime, authentic local experiences.

They offer private, luxury travel programs and inspirational group travel programs in New York City, Washington, DC, Boston, Philadelphia, Charleston, Savannah, and beyond.

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Jorge Alvarez, Head Concierge, The Milestone Hotel

[The Milestone Hotel & Residences](#) - A Gateway to the Heart and Soul of London

Jorge Alvarez, Head Concierge at The Milestone Hotel, embodies the dedication and passion that defines Red Carnation Hotels. Starting his career in 2006 as a luggage porter, Jorge quickly demonstrated his commitment to delivering exceptional service. His efforts were soon recognized, leading to his promotion to Deputy Head Concierge in 2011. Today, Jorge leads The Milestone's concierge team with the same dedication, drawing on nearly two decades of experience to curate truly personalized guest experiences.

A proud member of The Society of Golden Keys (Les Clefs d'Or), Jorge exemplifies the art of the concierge, excelling in sourcing exclusive tickets and uncovering London's hidden gems for guests. His extensive knowledge of the city—from iconic landmarks to under-the-radar treasures—ensures that every recommendation is tailored to create lasting memories. Whether organizing last-minute theatre tickets or arranging private tours of London's historic sites, Jorge's expertise and connections allow him to offer guests exclusive access to the best that the city has to offer.

Under Jorge's leadership, The Milestone's concierge team provides guests with unforgettable experiences. With a focus on personalized service, Jorge and his team go above and beyond, transforming each stay into a unique journey filled with remarkable moments that reflect London's vibrant character.

REBECCA RECOMMENDS

Inspirational destinations & properties of excellence



Bertrand Collignon, Owner of Decouvertes, right, and David Collignon, his son, left

[Decouvertes, France](#) - A Culture of Excellence

Bertrand Collignon's journey to becoming a leader in luxury travel is rooted in a rich heritage and diverse experiences. Raised in a prestigious military family, with grandfathers who were generals and a father who was a colonel, he developed discipline and leadership early on. Growing up in Saumur, surrounded by the elegance of horse shows and ceremonial officers, Bertrand cultivated an appreciation for tradition and excellence. Later, his teenage years in Paris deepened his love for culture, a passion that became central to his professional path.

Balancing academics with adventure, Bertrand studied law in Montpellier while competing in the America's Cup aboard the *French Kiss* racing yacht. This transformative experience instilled teamwork and precision into his leadership style. His ventures into publishing and human resources consulting further honed his skills in empowering individuals and fostering growth. These experiences shaped his approach when he joined Decouvertes DMC in 1999, where he has since guided the company to become a leader in bespoke luxury travel, partnering with elite institutions and offering unmatched cultural experiences.

Today, Bertrand oversees a team of 33, driven by his unwavering commitment to integrity, trust, and loyalty. As he inspires his employees to excel, Bertrand's vision for Decouvertes remains clear: to craft unparalleled travel experiences while fostering a culture of excellence and fulfillment for every individual involved.

REBECCA RECOMMENDS

Inspirational destinations & properties of excellence



Head Chef, Ashley Binder and Head Gardener, Andrew Leighton



Head Chef's final touches

[Middlethorpe Hall & Spa, North Yorkshire, England](#) - Unsung Heroes Behind Exceptional Hospitality

For discerning travelers, there is an expectation for perfection and service when choosing a hotel. This is what guests appreciate when staying at Middlethorpe Hall, but who are the unsung heroes behind the scenes, putting everything in place and attending to detail, not only to meet but exceed those expectations?

On arrival your guests will find their room in a state of pristine condition, the Head Housekeeper, Eva Plaveniece, having checked through in detail prior to arrival to ensure their every comfort. Amenities will be laid out to help oneself to fresh coffee or tea, and a welcome note from the General Manager.

In the morning, having ordered a freshly cooked breakfast, guests may look out across the manicured lawn, and later wander along the fragrant lavender border of the rose garden into a series of garden rooms, each displaying seasonal interest. This is the work of Head Gardener Andrew Leighton and his team of staff and volunteers. Meeting regularly with Head Chef Ashley Binder, they plan what to grow in the way of fruit, vegetables, and herbs ready to be incorporated into delicious lunch and dinner menus.



From the warm greeting at reception to the presentation of each room, attentive service when dining, the quality of food, well-being treatments in the spa, maintenance of this magnificent historic building inside and out, and the beautifully landscaped gardens, there is a dedicated and enthusiastic team of individuals, each taking pride in their part of the overall picture—an orchestra working in harmony under the direction of Lionel Chatard, who has been at the helm for over 20 years. This is what makes a stay at Middlethorpe Hall such a memorable experience.