

Opinions

Kempinski's portfolio will not surpass the firm's age

16 APRIL 2018 7:27 AM

A breakfast media event revealed the rich history and bright future of Kempinski Hotels, and a stunning hotel has made me rethink my mistrust of Instagram.



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Last Thursday morning, I attended a delightful media breakfast at the Ivy Soho Brasserie in London with the good people from Kempinski Hotels.

Ten or so of the company's GMs were there, representing hotels in Germany, Hungary, Turkey, Lithuania, Austria and Italy, as was [Kempinski](#) COO of Europe Bernold Schroeder.

Schroeder told me the search for a London address continues. He added things purposefully move at a slightly slower rate at Kempinski than they would at a heavily franchised hotel chain.

"We never want more hotels than the age of the company," Schroeder joked with the assembled press, but there seems to me quite a sensible logic in that excellent one-liner.

Kempinski was founded in 1897 and thus had its 120th anniversary last year. Today it has 75 properties in 33 countries.

The company's pipeline is not talked about too much, Schroeder said, with signings made public only when construction is far down the line.

The history of the German chain is an interesting, rich tapestry. Eva-Maria Panzer, the firm's corporate director of public relations, ended her description of each of its earliest hotels by saying something along the lines of, "Unfortunately that property no longer exists."

Bombings during World War II ended a couple properties, and that is no laughing matter of course, but a giggle was had when Panzer reached the first hotel in the portfolio that is still upright. All of them have been since the end of those hostilities.

The company's most famous asset, Hotel Adlon Kempinski, had a setback of its own in 1945.

Friederike Kelling, the hotel's assistant director of sales, told us that the property survived the war but sadly not its immediate aftermath.

After the fall of Berlin, the hotel was occupied by Russians, and apparently its officers were delighted to find its well-stocked wine cellar. One evening after a few glasses of wine and celebratory cigars, a fire ignited inside the building and burned the hotel down.

It was rebuilt and reopened in 1997, and its new guise celebrates its 21st birthday on 23 August.

Another recent opening is the San Clemente Palace Kempinski, in Venice, Italy, which sits on its own private island and closes during the winter. It opened in 2016 in a 12th century monastery.

I have passed this island on the way from the Grand Canal to the Lido outpost of Pellestrina, where a couple of excellent fish restaurants nearby feel a million miles away from the bustle of Piazza San Marco.

Should I Instagram?

During the breakfast, one GM encouraged those in attendance to open Instagram.

I forget why, as my mind starts glazing over when I hear such requests.

I keep being encouraged to discover what I am sure are the obvious delights of this social media phenomenon by my colleagues (I do Tweet!), but as probably everyone zoomed to their mobiles to do as was politely bidden, I continued with my granola.

I was reminded of my inadequacies when less than an hour later I saw that Luxury Travel Advisor revealed [the world's most Instagrammable hotel](#). But this was announced back in March, which I must have missed while recovering from attending the International Hotel Investment Forum in Berlin.

The hotel darling of Instagram is the Anantara Kihavah in the Maldives, which out of 121,000 votes received 45,385, or for those who cannot Instagram but can do mathematics is 37.5%.

I find it strange to contemplate how that was calculated, considering the property must get a lot of competition from all the other island resorts in this Indian Ocean nation, and the other 100,000 or so hotels on the planet.

It is a very pretty hotel, with impressively pretty Instagram photos showing us all just how much.

Maybe I'll stick a toe in the perhaps clear waters of Instagram?

But as the Arabian Hotel Investment Conference is next week, I'll no doubt delay things for a couple of weeks at least as I attend and then write. I hope a mist of bewilderment does not come back to blur my vision.

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