

Boutique Hotels Are Most of All about Quality and Service

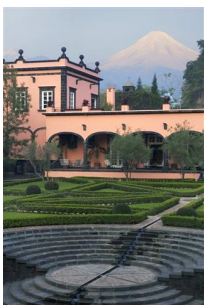


Interview with **David Maranzana**, President and Founder of Epoque Hotels.

For those who are unfamiliar with this kind of business model in which hotels of different ownership are collected under one umbrella, could you explain the underlying principle behind this kind of association, and the advantages for you as an association and for the guests?

Epoque Hotels is a collection of independent boutique hotels in the world. The main benefit for a boutique hotelier to join such collection is to be able to compete with major chains that allow more budget for marketing activities. Epoque Hotels publishes a slick hotel directory that is sent to all the hotel members as well as to a great number of travel agencies and trade shows worldwide. The Epoque Staff arranges also sales calls to travel agencies in the major destinations in the world that would be tremendously expensive for each single property to take part on their own. Furthermore, our website has a very high Page Rank and a large number of visitors, thus serving boutique hotels to gain visibility and appreciation.

From the standpoint of the guest, the advantage Epoque Hotels gives is that you have one reference point instead of many; that is, if you love boutique hotels, you will have to look into all the websites in order to get information and book. Instead, by visiting our website you will find the entire collection divided by destination, name and type of hotel (beach resort, city hotel, spa, business etc.). In addition, boutique hotels are most of all about quality and service. By way of a consortium like Epoque Hotels, the guest is able to take advantage of the best of both worlds: one is the creativity of unique boutique hotels, and the other is the convenience of large hotel chains able to offer communication and organization.



How do you select your hotels? There is a wide range both in design and price, is it your aim to offer something to everyone or do you focus on a specific clientele?

First of all the property needs to be an independent hotel, which is the main prerogative of boutique hotels. Boutique hotels are typically 4–5 star hotels, with high standards, but I would like to emphasize that it is not just about luxury, rather about innovation, creativity, uniqueness and personalized service. Hotels that are part of a chain need to comply with certain paradigms. A chain conveys the idea of being chained, that is constrained. If you are not nailed by corporate regulations you can have freedom of design. Other important criteria for our selection are that the property be in a central or particularly appealing location and that the hotel represents in some way the character, the essence of the city or town where it is located.

As per the client we focus on, it is mainly the artistic, independent minded traveler. Someone who aims at a one-of-a kind travel experience. To make a comparison, it's about who is more inclined to watch an independent film rather than a Hollywood blockbuster.

What makes you different from other boutique hotel groups such as Tablet Hotels, Mr. & Mrs. Smith, etc. ?

The main difference between Epoque Hotels and the aforementioned companies is that they are reservations websites. Epoque, as stated earlier provides to the hoteliers not merely that, but also provides a series of marketing services such as sales calls, trade shows presence, directory, PR, web optimization, consulting, that the others do not supply.



Many travelers are still a bit conservative in choosing hotels, usually thinking that in bigger hotel chains they will be better off. What would you say to encourage travelers to break with the tradition and choose a boutique hotel?

Traveling is all about adventure, about seeing and experiencing something different and new. Staying at a chain hotel implies experiencing the same thing over and over, whether you are in Beijing, in Los Angeles or in Paris. On the contrary, choosing a boutique hotel gives the traveler a bit of the soul of the location, enriching the travel experience. We at Epoque Hotels guarantee quality and standards that are in line with any big hotel chain, while simultaneously offering diversity.



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