



Hospitality and individuality

the unchained experience

As the twentieth century opened its doors to the full force of mass production, so the twenty-first century is welcoming the era of mass customisation. If you want to design your own wall coverings, car features, socks (odd, of course) or wine labels, you can. You would like your steak tartare cooked? *à point?* Certainly, sir.

It took the travel industry longer to get the hang of customisation. The emergence of the airline industry halfway through the last century kept the customer waiting awhile for a return to the halcyon days of elegant travel and personal service. Yet it seems clear that this is happening in the world of hospitality.

In days gone by, chains at least guaranteed hygiene, but today's traveller wants more than reassurance on hygiene factors. Punctuality, cleanliness, courtesy are, or should be, basic expectations. The aeroplane may still feel like a cattle truck but, after the flight, the guest at restaurant or hotel is today on the *qui vive* for something individual. Something less chain-like.

It has always been easier to achieve distinctiveness at the top of the market but as the search for individuality intensifies there - amongst the boutique hotel operators and the Michelin rosette rejectors - so we can see signs of this trend trickling down the pyramid.

Why else would McDonald's buy such a share of Prêt à Manger? Because the new kids on the block understand individuality and the profits of mass customisation.

Why the 'unpacked holiday'? Because we have done conformity and need the next step, a new, individual experience.

Now watch and wonder as the budget hotels offer CD facilities and pubs freshen up their food offers.

Meanwhile, closer to the top of the pyramid, where the trickling begins, *Locum Destination Review* explores how three very different hotel operators are moulding the future.

At Hotel du Vin, Robin Hutson and his partner Gerard Basset are winning awards and loyal custom on the back of a highly individual hotel concept. This micro-chain is distinctive from the cellar upwards.

At Hotel Tresanton, Olga Polizzi has designed a hotel that prevents the English Riviera from being an overclaim, whilst her eye ensures the Forte name represents individuality far more today than in the chain of yesteryear.

Over amongst the major players, at Inter-Continental, Paul Simmons explains how the marketing man might help restore a sense of individuality to an international hotel chain, at the same time as consistent positioning, no less.

In a world that has shrunk, for a guest that demands more, each of these hotel leaders - entrepreneur, designer, marketer - is focused on the issue of identity, on hospitality with a stamp of individuality, on the unchained experience.



The Amstel Inter-Continental Hotel, Amsterdam

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Exterior, Hotel Du Vin, Bristol



The Tresanton Hotel, Cornwall