

HOTELLER

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THE GOLDEN RULE

With 50 years of experience, Atlific Hotels finds success in owner-manager reciprocity

THE
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Battered but not beaten, the luxury segment is primed for future growth

BEDROOMS OF THE NATION

Designers continue to reinvent the average guest room

POWER PLAY

The best hotels are clean, green and energy efficient

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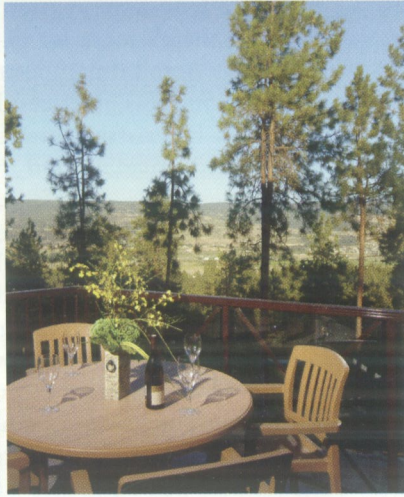
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EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

GREENER THAN THOU

Hospitality players jostle in the fight to take environmentalism to the next level // BY D'ARCY JENISH



GREEN GIANTS: (clockwise from top) Bellstar's Spirit Ridge resort blends into the desert terrain in Osoyoos, B.C.; open-air patio at Spirit Ridge; the Hilton Garden Inn Toronto Airport.

Call it Environmentalism 101. In the hospitality industry it consists of encouraging guests to conserve soaps, shampoos and water and re-using towels if they're staying more than one night. Those practices have been well established for years and hotel owners and operators have since moved the environmental yardstick a long way forward.

One of the green leaders in the Canadian industry is Calgary-based Bellstar Hotels and Resorts, a developer and operator of high-end condominium resorts in Alberta and British Columbia. "We take a more holistic view of the environment," says president and CEO Ed Romanowski. "Our goal is to make our properties carbon neutral."

Bellstar has placed environmental sustainability in the heart of the design and development of its properties, some of which lie within national parks, while others stand in pristine wilderness locales. Given their settings, the company strives to think green before shovels go in the ground to start a new project. For example, when Bellstar developed its Spirit Ridge resort on desert-like terrain near Osoyoos, B.C., the company used building materials, especially on the exterior, which matched the surrounding countryside. It planted exotic, drought-resistant trees and shrubs on the grounds rather than conventional lawn grass, which would have to be heavily irrigated. It has also erected discrete fences to keep out dangerous snakes that would have to be killed if they were found on the property.

That environmental commitment extends to the operation of properties as well. Romanowski says the company pays a premium to purchase electricity derived from wind power. It stocks bathrooms with amenity packages — soap, shampoo and body lotions — which contain fewer additives and contaminants than conventional products, and it purchases quality towels and linens because they last longer. Bellstar also turns

to local growers of fruit and vegetables for its F&B program when feasible, and wine lists largely comprise domestic labels.

They're small measures, Romanowski acknowledges, the kind of steps that might be dubbed 'green washing.' But Bellstar aims higher. The company has installed sensors that detect when doors are open at public entrances or from guest rooms to balconies. When that happens, the HVAC systems in those parts of the resort shut down temporarily. The company also trains housekeeping to turn off lights and turn down thermostats in unoccupied rooms. "It's pretty basic stuff in terms of managing energy," says Romanowski, "but having doors open when the air conditioning is running is one of the most wasteful practices in our business."

Going green can have a positive impact on the bottom line, too. "Hoteliers can get the same rates of return by being good stewards of the environment," Romanowski insists.

"Environmental sustainability is tied to business sustainability," says Mari Snyder, vice-president, Social Responsibility, with Bethesda, Md.-based Marriot International Inc. Because of rising energy prices, Marriott was compelled to look for ways to reduce consumption and cut costs. It created an energy department that conducts audits on behalf of property owners and provides them with checklists on things they can do to operate more efficiently. It also established a number of corporate objectives to reduce energy consumption and