



Fellows Broadsheet

The Institute of Hospitality Fellows Broadsheet is a thought-leadership article written by a member of our esteemed College of Fellows. Celebrating the wealth of professionalism, knowledge and expertise within our diverse, worldwide hospitality family. The Fellows Broadsheet is published exclusively for members.

A career in hospitality - Travel the world

Rachel Begbie FIH has been a member of the Institute of Hospitality (IoH) for over 30 years. Her IoH journey began in 1989 as a hospitality student in Leeds and resulted in Rachel becoming an IoH Fellow in 2019.

She is an active member of the College of Fellows and supports the IoH on research and discussion panels. Rachel's consultancy work involves her regularly coaching and mentoring hospitality professionals.

In this month's Fellows Broadsheet Rachel talks about **A career in hospitality - Travel the world**. Travel has always been something that has fascinated me. As a child my parents took my brother and I on many amazing holidays, exploring France, Italy, Spain, Holland and Switzerland and I can still recall many facts from those amazing trips even today.

Once at college I had the opportunity to be part of a college exchange programme. The Thomas Danby College in Leeds, England had partnered with a culinary school in Lille in northern France so off I went for two weeks to learn and explore.





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Study and culture

Choosing where to study my BTEC Higher National Diploma, I had this desire to complete my internship in Switzerland, one of the best countries for hospitality in the world. Through Fylde College, Blackpool, England I started my studies and headed to Weggis on the banks of Lake Lucerne for a six-month internship in Food and Beverage at the Hotel Beau Rivage.

Days off were spent exploring, practising French and learning German and upon graduation I worked for Metropole and Stakis Hotels in the UK. Both are now part of the Hilton Hotel Group.

New places

In May 1999 I joined the luxury international hotel and resort group, the Four Seasons as a Training Manager and in 2000 was asked to roll out a new interviewing methodology so off I flew to Berlin, then Prague, Lisbon, Istanbul and Dublin. It was amazing. I was doing a job I loved and getting to travel and see new places at the same time. Before long, these hotels asked me to return to run other training and suddenly, I became the go-to trainer in the region.

One of the amazing benefits of working for a luxury, international company was the ability to travel and stay at the properties for leisure. Four Seasons offered complimentary nights, so New York, Boston, Miami, Toronto, Vancouver, Whistler, Las Vegas, San Francisco, Mumbai, Casablanca, Marrakesh, Moscow, St Petersburg, Sharm El Sheikh, and Jordan, were just some of the places I visited.

Work and travel

Task Force Assignments, supporting other locations, presented me with more amazing opportunities to travel. Including in 2007, now as Director of Human Resources, the Middle East made its first call. A new hotel in Alexandria, Egypt needed a HR Director to lead the preopening phase, so off I went.

In 2009 the call came again for a HR Director to start the pre-opening phase for a new property in Beirut. And after another amazing experience this time being part of the first five people on the ground and meeting many incredible people, I returned to the UK, immediately had itchy feet, and realised I wanted to live overseas.

In August 2011 I moved back to Beirut as Director of HR and felt at home and was quickly promoted and had three additional new hotels in St Petersburg, Johannesburg and then Moscow to look after. Then overseeing the Manager-in-Training Programme for the EMEA region came next with regular visits to the famous Swiss Hotel Schools, until finally I was appointed Regional Director, overseeing nine hotels in seven countries.

After six years in Beirut, I returned to the UK in 2017 and joined Corinthia Hotels, managing their Learning, Development and Wellbeing for the group. Although London based, I was travelling again visiting new and old familiar places such as Malta, Tunisia, Portugal, Hungary, Czech Republic, Russia and Sudan.

In 2020 I decided to set up my own business. Then in autumn 2022, I was approached to support the opening of the first Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Africa (Egypt) as HR Director. I packed my bags and headed off to Cairo again for 5 months.





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So what have I learnt along the way?

Be open minded and humble is the key to success for an international career. You are no better than anyone else. This is important as in some locations 'Expats' are not always looked upon positively by the locals.

Teach and guide. That is your role. You are there to share your knowledge and leave a positive mark on the people who will continue to work after you have left.

Be a chameleon to your environment. Be mindful of the culture. Make an effort to learn about their customs and do your utmost to fit in.

Be willing to learn the language. You may not be fluent but being able to say some words/phrases in the local language really means a lot to the team.

Be proud of being in the country you are in and become a cheerleader for it. Make sure you make time to explore the country and what it has to offer.

Never make enemies. You never know if your paths with cross again. This has honestly happened to me so many times in my career. Just recently in Cairo I found myself working with two people I worked with in 1997 and in 2009. The world is a small place, and the hospitality world is even smaller.

What are the benefits of an international hospitality career?

To me I have been able to merge two passions together – hospitality and travel. There are not many jobs in the world where you can do this.

In Conclusion

Travel is not just about seeing new places, it is about experiencing cultures, learning and opening your mind.

I feel truly blessed that I am not only able to work in and be part of an amazing industry, but I have also been able to see many parts of the world. There is still much more to see and I hope very much my passion for hospitality and what I do will take me there.

I always say to people entering the industry 'seize every opportunity, you never know where it will take you, what you will see, experience and learn as a result.



**Be brave
Be strong
And step out of your comfort zone
You will not regret it.**



BE BRAVE

About the author

After a successful career in Human Resources Management working for some of the world's leading hotel brands in the UK and overseas, Rachel set up RachelEBegbie Consulting Services.

References & further information

www.fourseasons.com
www.corthinthia.com
www.waldorfastoria.com

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