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TravelPulse Q&A: One-on-One With Columbia Hospitality

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PHOTO: Exterior of The State Hotel in Washington. (Photo via Columbia Hospitality)

Seattle-based management and consulting company Columbia Hospitality Inc. (CHI) was founded in 1995.

This year, the business is celebrating a milestone—for the first time in its 23-year history, CHI will debut more new properties in a 12-month period than ever before.

The new openings are a testament to the company's growing presence across the Pacific Northwest and increasingly, the West Coast.

While the group's hotels and resorts portfolio includes a smattering of branded hotels, CHI's sweet spot is independent boutique hotels that span Washington, Montana, Idaho and California, Hawaii and Arizona. The properties range from city-center hotels and golf and spa resorts to an inn set against a vineyard backdrop.

Here, CHI Senior Vice President Jolene DiSalvo offers TravelPulse readers a more detailed overview of CHI and its distinctive hotels and resorts.



PHOTO: Sage Lodge, located on the banks of the Yellowstone River in Montana. (Photo via Columbia Hospitality)

TravelPulse (TP): How would you describe Columbia Hospitality's hotels and resorts as far as the experience they offer guests?

Jolene DiSalvo (JD): If you are looking for local flavor and ambiance, Columbia Hospitality operates hotels and resorts that perfectly fit the bill, and the experiences are anything but cookie cutter. Guests can feel the urban soul of Seattle's downtown location at The State Hotel, located just steps away from the Pike Place Market, or enjoy the rugged terrain of Montana at Sage Lodge, one of our properties that just opened last year on the banks of the Yellowstone River.

With that said, and with each property's wonderful attributes, the real heart and soul comes from our team members. They are passionate about what they do and thrive in an atmosphere where they can surprise and delight our guests.

They play an active role in developing creative programming and packages that they themselves would enjoy doing, whether that's getting a guest a seat at a pop-up dinner or taking a group out on a guided mountain bike tour.

TP: Could you talk about the latest additions to the Columbia Hospitality portfolio?

JD: Columbia Hospitality currently represents 24 hotels and resorts, including five in development. The most recent additions to our portfolio include The State Hotel in the historic Eitel building that just opened at the iconic location of 2nd & Pike in downtown Seattle, The Inn at Abeja in Walla Walla that's on 38-acres with a working winery, and Icicle Village Resort in Leavenworth, Washington. We're also eagerly anticipating the opening of Hotel Indigo at Waterfront Place in Everett, Washington in August.

TP: What are your top two selling tips for travel agents selling Columbia Hospitality hotels and resorts?

JD: Columbia knows that travel agents offer a humanistic touch in an increasingly more technologically driven world, so it's important to keep our relationships alive and flourishing. We are committed to providing exceptional experiences, and we know that is the goal of the agent as well. We ensure the guest has a memorable stay, and we make the agent look like a star!

We embrace working with travel consortiums and their members—they are a viable part of our business and we consider them an extension of our sales teams! Our properties pay commissions on published rates; percentages may vary based on property needs, and often properties will offer special incentives or industry rates specifically for an agent's personal travel. Participation in marketing programs, conducting office visits, and attending tradeshow are a few ways that our sales teams interact with agents.