24 June 2014

**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS**

**Fast Facts – The Top 10**

* George Gershwin wrote “An American in Paris” in 1928 at the hotel, and earlier in May 1922 five of the greatest artists of the 20th century sat down to dinner – writers James Joyce and Marcel Proust, artist Pablo Picasso, choreographer Sergei Diaghilev and composer Igor Stravinsky
* The Paris Peace Accords, which ended the Vietnam War, were signed here in 1973
* The four-year renovation included 40,000 pieces of gold leaf, 1,000 individual pieces of wood removed, restored and replaced, “fish scale” slate roof tiles fashioned by hand, and 20 stonemasons working on the façade
* The two paintings on the ceiling of Le Lounge Kléber took 10 months to be restored by Cinzia Pasquali, who works at Versailles and the Louvre
* The ornamental staircase was created by Schwartz & Meurer, who constructed the Eiffel Tower, while the L’Oiseau Blanc rooftop terraces were by Fonderie GHM, responsible for Paris’ Art Nouveau-style Metro entrances
* The customised car fleet includes a magnificent 1934 Rolls-Royce Phantom II, a Rolls-Royce EWB Phantom, two MINI Clubmans and 10 BMW 7 Series limousines - all in The Peninsula Hotels’ signature green livery – plus an underground car park holding 57 cars
* The “Dancing Leaves” installation inside the entrance Lobby comprises 800 individual hand-blown crystal leaves by Lasvit.
* Revolutionary in-room technology offers 11 languages. In-room electronics are powered by 2.5 kilometres of cable concealed behind the wall of every guest room.

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**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS – 2**

* WiFi, international long-distance calls, video-on-demand and Nespresso coffee machines are all with compliments of The Peninsula.
* LiLi’s art pieces include the first image ever printed on fibre-optic fabric, 33,000 crystals hammered into Perspex, paper-cut panels using seven French- Chinese dictionaries and four large silk tassels, the largest ever produced in the history of Passementiers Declercq, founded in 1852.

READ ON FOR MORE FASCINATING FACTS……

**A little history…**

* **A majestic beginning** – The Peninsula Paris is located in one of Paris’ most famous *“grands hotels”*, which opened in 1908 and enjoyed 40 years hosting the rich and famous, the titled and tycoons, together with leading lights in the world of the arts, literature and music during the “Belle Epoque” and “Années Folles”, when Paris was at the height of its creativity and glamour.
* Before The Majestic was built, Russian millionaire Count Basilewski originally constructed his very own ‘mini-Versailles’ on the site. In exile from Spain, Queen Isabella II of Spain occupied the château from 1868 to 1906.
* **Ahead of its time** - a late 19th century classic French-style building, the hotel was one of the most innovative buildings of its era as it was one of the first to use reinforced concrete, with the “Hennebique beams” (named after its inventor François Hennebique) enabling vast public spaces to be created without supports or columns as required previously. In the current restoration, the grandeur and sheer scale of the hotel’s expansive public spaces have been retained and preserved – and unlike other hotels of the era which have subdivided spaces and changed footprints, The Peninsula Paris has been described as Paris’ most architecturally authentic hotel space, similar to the city’s cultural landmarks, and retaining the “spirit” of the building.

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**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS – 3**

* It was the first hotel to offer private bathrooms in its guestrooms and suites, with 350 bathrooms for its 400 rooms. Today, The Peninsula has just 200 guestrooms – all of course with their own bathrooms!
* The League of Nations – forerunner of the United Nations – was founded in the hotel in 1919, when it was the home of the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, leading to the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.
* At the outbreak of World War One, various grand Parisian buildings - including the hotel - were requisitioned to house temporary hospitals for soldiers returning from the Front. The requisition did not last more than five months, but the occupancy as a refuge for the injured took its toll, resulting in serious damage to the hotel. As such, it did not open for business again until 1916.
* **An American in Paris** - Composer George Gershwin spent four weeks at the hotel in spring 1928 as part of a grand tour of Europe, visiting London, Paris, Vienna and Budapest. The orchestral score for “An American in Paris” is marked “Begun in early 1928”, and he made considerable progress on his work while at the hotel – specifically on the blues section - which later premiered at Carnegie Hall in New York on 13 December 1928.
* **A most extraordinary dinner party** - 18 May 1922 saw five of the greatest artists of the 20th century sitting down to a late supper at the hotel at the invitation of Sydney and Viola Schiff to celebrate the debut of Diaghilev’s ballet “Le Renard”. It would be the only time that writers James Joyce and Marcel Proust, artist Pablo Picasso, choreographer Sergei Diaghilev and composer Igor Stravinsky would be in a room together, with each of these exponents of twentieth-century modernism at the peak of his creative powers. The menu featured dishes plucked from Proust’s novels, and it was one of his last public appearances – if not the last - before his death in November that year.

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**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS – 4**

* **Confessions of an advertising man** – Advertising guru David Ogilvy (1911 – 1999) arrived in Paris in 1931 after being expelled from Oxford University, and took a job as an apprentice chef in the hotel kitchens.. During the year he worked there, head chef Monsieur Pitard made an everlasting impression on him and helped form his principles of management. In a 1972 talk on leadership, he recalled the high morale in Pitard’s kitchen:

“I saw my old boss in the kitchens fire one of his chefs because the poor devil could not get his brioches to rise straight. I was shocked by his ruthlessness, but it made all the other chefs feel that they were working in the best kitchen in the world. Their morale would have done credit to the US Marine Corps”.

* In 1936, the hotel was sold to the French government and it became the UNESCO Head Office from 1946 to 1958. As the hotel was not designed to house offices, this led to some odd working arrangements, with secretaries sharing spacious rooms and storing their files in wardrobes, while middle-grade professionals were put in disused bathrooms, where the only place to keep their papers was the bathtub.
* **International links** - following the wartime occupation of Paris, the hotel was then converted into UNESCO’s headquarters in 1946, and in 1958 became the International Conference Centre (*Centre International de Conferences*) for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and used to host high profile events until 2009. The first meetings of the UNESCO General Conference took place there in 1946.
* **Peace in our time** - Operated by the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the centre was the scene of some historic accords, including The Paris Peace Accords of 1991 (putting an end to the Cambodian-Vietnamese War and Khmer Rouge civil war) and those of 1973 which brought the Vietnam War (1961 – 1973) to an end. Negotiated by Henry Kissinger, the “Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam” was signed on 27 January 1973 by the governments of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), The Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), the United States and the

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**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS – 5**

and the PRG (Provisional Revolutionary Government, representing indigenous South Vietnamese revolutionaries).

* More recently, it was the scene of negotiations on Kosovo, Ivory Coast and a long list of international issues.

**A Tale of Two Avenues**

* One of the twelve avenues leading from the Arc de Triomphe, Avenue Kléber was named after Jean Baptiste Kléber, a French General during the French Revolutionary Wars.
* It has featured as a location in the Hollywood movie “The Bourne Identity”, and also in the popular British TV series “Dr Who”.
* Off Avenue Kléber is Avenue des Portugais, where the main entrance to the hotel is located. The second shortest avenue in the city at 55 metres long and 26 metres wide and formerly known as Avenue de Sofia, the name was changed on 14 July 1918 as a tribute to the 30,000 Portuguese soldiers who fought alongside the Allied troops during the First World War. A plaque on The Peninsula’s wall commemorates this.
* The main entrance to The Peninsula is located on this Avenue, giving plenty of space for guests’ cars and access into the hotel’s own underground garage.

**The Renaissance of a Parisian Palace**

* It took two years to build the original hotel (1906-1908), but four years to restore the building (2010 – 2014).
* The restoration project was carried out in close consultation with France’s three principal heritage bodies – Les Architectes des Batiments de France, Les Monuments Historiques, and La Commission du Vieux Paris.

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**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS – 6**

* A total of 3,000 workers, comprising 40 nationalities, worked on the building, with around 900 on site every day.
* An extremely complicated feat of engineering, as the entire structure had to be reconstructed on a metal frame and the foundations underpinned. The steel used weighed the equivalent of five French TGV high-speed trains, while 30,000 tonnes of concrete were poured – three times the weight of the Eiffel Tower.
* Three new basements were excavated to create the spa and swimming pool and underground car park, removing 35,370 m3 of earth, the equivalent of 12 Olympic-sized swimming pools.
* Three types of limestone were used for the façade – St Leu-la-Foret, Chauvigny and Comblanchien - came from the same quarries as the original construction which started in 1906. The façade restoration employed the talents of 20 skilled stonemasons from historic monument specialist Degaine to restore the 10,000 sq m area with its elaborate carved stone flowers, bows and ribbons. Each flower cascade took a stonemason three weeks of work, with 12 hours for a small bow.
* **All that glitters** – 40,000 pieces of gold leaf, each measuring 8 sq cm and covering an area of approximately 200 sq m, were used in the restoration of The Peninsula Paris. Following 22 initial steps to prepare the wood, each gold leaf was applied by hand and small brushes by the team of Gohard Atelier, another family company founded in 1962. With 15 full-time gilders, Gohard is the largest company of this type and also the biggest consumer of gold leaf in France. Previous commissions in Paris have included the dome of Les Invalides (using 550,000 gold leaves) and the Palace of Versailles, while in the US their work includes the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, Getty Museum in LA, City Hall in New York and the flame of the Statue of Liberty.

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**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS – 7**

* The delicate blue and gold Etruscan-style Salon Adam was recreated and hand-painted from four photos of the original salon by Gohard artists, using extensive research and skill to ensure an identical replica of the original.
* Working with the heritage authorities and paint analysis experts, The Lobby’s original cream and gold decor was discovered under six layers of green paint, and was restored to its authentic colour scheme.
* **From the Louvre to the Lobby** - the two paintings on the ceiling of the Cigar Lounge - representing music and science and geography respectively - were restored by Cinzia Pasquali, who has restored paintings by Leonardo da Vinci at the Louvre, and also the Palace of Versailles. The paintings were covered by white paint, which took three months to remove and clean. It then required two weeks to take the paintings down and six months to restore them before replacing them in situ.
* A total of 1,000 individual pieces of wood were removed from the original building – including 370 and 130 sections from the Lobby and the Bar respectively - to undergo restoration and re-installation by wood restoration experts Atelier Fancelli - a small family company of just 12 employees, stretching back three generations. Each piece was wood was individually numbered and removed, and then sanded down, repaired, restored and replaced.
* **Bits and pieces** - the mosaic borders in the two inner courtyards are formed from the original Lobby mosaic floor. The original floor was removed and taken to Italy for restoration and repair, and then redesigned and relaid in situ.
* The bronze and wrought ironwork of the ornamental staircase leading from the Lobby was created by Schwartz & Meurer, the company which constructed the Eiffel Tower.

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**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS – 8**

* The railings along the rooftop terraces were made by Fonderie GHM, the heritage company responsible for Paris’ much-loved Art Nouveau-style Metro entrances.
* There were originally three towers facing into the inner courtyard, but one was moved and a fourth created to make four and render the courtyard symmetrical.
* The roof was completely reconstructed by hand, using traditional French materials and techniques – oak beams, Angers-Trélazé slates and zinc flashings – in order to keep the authentic spirit of the building.
* The hotel was re-roofed with 100,000 slate tiles from the same quarry in Angers-Trélazé as those on the original building in 1906. Mined by the century-old company Les Ardoisières d’Angers-Trélazé, the mine is now closed as the veins of slate are exhausted - a few key veins had been kept exclusively for official historic monuments, and The Peninsula Paris is one of the last buildings to use slate from this quarry.
* ”Fish scale’ slate tiles were used to re-roof the hotel’s towers, initially cut by machine into rectangles, and then fashioned by hand into a fish-scale shape. Apart from the skill required to shape the tiles, the tilers themselves need to be extremely skilled to be able to tile the curves and shapes of the roof with these tiles.
* The original curved oak roof beams in the corners of the building were still intact after more than a century, so they were retained in order to keep the spirit of the building.
* The original white and turquoise enamel bricks in the Oiseau Blanc courtyard were cleaned and replaced where required, with new bricks made by a specialist company in Anjou. Originally these light wells were very common across Paris, but most have been torn down, so this is an extremely fine remaining example of the genre.

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**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS – 9**

* The zinc flashings or frames surrounding each window and rooftop detailing were all beaten, pressed and finished by hand, in order to retain the original artisanal feel when the building was first created.
* The magnificent stucco trompe *l’oeil* ‘marble’ columns lining the ground floor galleries had been painted over, and it took seven days to wax and shine each column by hand once the paint was removed.
* **Party on**! The ballroom is a triple-glazed and insulated ‘box within a box’, ensuring that the room is completely sound-proofed – another feat of engineering mastery.

**Getting there is half the fun!**

* The Peninsula Paris continues the long-term record-breaking partnership with Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, in place since The Peninsula Hong Kong’s first purchase of seven Silver Shadows in 1970. One bespoke Rolls-Royce extended wheelbase Phantom – extensively customised to Peninsula requirements and painted in the exclusive Peninsula green – is available for guest hire.
* A magnificent 1934 Rolls-Royce Phantom II takes pride of place in the Paris fleet. Sister to the 1934 Rolls-Royces at the Peninsula hotels in Hong Kong, Tokyo and Shanghai, she has undergone extensive renovation in Ashton Keynes, England, with a number of bespoke additions, including telephone and audio systems, WiFi, air-conditioning and a drinks cabinet.
* Two MINI Clubman vehicles are also available to zip guests around Paris – again, customised to Peninsula requirements including WiFi and a minibar.
* A fleet of 10 BMW 7 Series limousines transport guests to and from the airport and for hourly hire.

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**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS – 10**

* The Peninsula has its own underground car park, holding 57 cars – one of the very few in Paris to do so. A car wash and detailing facility ensures that every guest’s car is returned spick and span.

**A grand entrance**

* Designed to replicate the leaves on the plane trees lining Avenue Kléber, the bespoke chandelier inside the entrance Lobby is comprised of 800 individual, hand-blown crystal leaves, designed and created by the renowned Lasvit atelier in the Czech Republic. All blown by hand by the same artisan who has worked with the Lasvit team for over 20 years, each leaf weighs approx 1 kg, and the installation took a five-man team two weeks to complete. It took three years from the initial design to installation – the longest and most challenging project ever for Lasvit.
* The signature Peninsula door lions at the entrance are each 1.7 metres tall and 4.6 metric tons in weight. A tradition in China outside palaces, temples and the homes of the wealthy, door lions are believed to have powerful protective benefits for those inside. Always in pairs, the male lion has his paw on a ball (representing supremacy over the world), while the female restrains a cub (representing nurture).

**The most bespoke guest rooms in the world**

* The Peninsula Paris’ 200 guest accommodations (166 rooms and 34 suites) are among the largest and most spacious in Paris.
* Peninsula guest rooms are a feat of design, electronics and décor – at a secret location in Hong Kong, an initial room is developed with plywood furniture and fittings to determine the spaces and flow of the room. Then a fully functioning sample room is built - an exact replica in every way, including an enlarged photo of the city view from the window. It is repeatedly tested and fine-tuned until it is determined to be ready for Peninsula guests - The Peninsula Hotels is the only hotel group in the world to create their rooms to this level of detail.

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**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS – 11**

* Revolutionary in-room tablet technology (created in-house by Peninsula) sets new standards of guest personalisation, with fully customised interactive digital bedside and desk tablets preset in one of 11 languages (Arabic, Chinese (traditional and simplified), English, French, German, Italian, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish).
* 2.5 kilometres of cable are concealed behind the wall of every guest room (approximately 10 times more than an average hotel room elsewhere) – or 500 km for the whole hotel.
* WiFi, international long-distance calls, video-on-demand and Nespresso coffee machines are all with compliments of The Peninsula.
* Artist Helen Murray, who created the hand-carved leather headboards in each room, took her inspiration from the domes of the Grand Palais.

**Wining and dining**

* Six F&B venues offer the very best of France and The Peninsula – The Lobby, Lili Chinese restaurant, the Kléber Terrace, the Kléber Bar, the cigar lounge and L’Oiseau Blanc rooftop restaurant, bar and terrace with 360° views over Paris
* The Kléber Terrace is the largest enclosed terrace in Paris – accessing the Bar, Lobby and LiLi, it serves international and Cantonese dishes, drinks and snacks
* The four main wood and gold leaf columns in The Lobby respectively represent the theatre, the four seasons, hunting and music.
* The Chinese restaurant LiLi is located in the space that was once the dining room of the former Hotel Majestic.

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**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS – 12**

* The entry signage for Chinese restaurant LiLi is a world-first – the large 3 x 3.3 m fibre-optic hanging at the entrance to the restaurant is a portrait on nylon webbing and net fabric, woven through with optical fibre to produce a glowing, flowing effect never seen before. The first time an image has been printed on the woven fibre, it was created by Design Percept, a company founded in 2004 by industrial designer Clementine Chambon and fashion designer Francoise Mamert, in conjunction with The Peninsula’s interior designer Henry Leung and Jérome Declercq of Passementiers Declercq.
* The dome in the centre of the restaurant is inspired by the sound stage of a hall in Shanghai, designed to amplify the sound below.
* The four custom-made blue Oriental tassels in LiLi are each 1.6 metres in length. They took 600 man hours, 15 kilogrammes of silk and 40 kilogrammes of stippled fibre to make. They were created by Passementiers Declercq, a family company founded in 1852, which produced tassels for the Opera Garnier in 1870 and the Paris City Hall in the same year. The LiLi tassels are the largest the company has ever made.
* A giant crystal installation in the shape of a traditional Chinese opera head dress welcomes guests into LiLi. Korean artist Ran Hwang hammered 32,831 crystals on pins into a plexiglass base to create this glittering tribute to Chinese opera. Meanwhile a triptych of traditional Chinese paper-cut panels using paper from Chinese-French dictionaries again spotlights the link between Chinese and French culture. Artist Jam Wu searched vintage bookstores in Taiwan for a year before finally taking apart seven old dictionaries to create the intricate lace-like work, with its three panels depicting classic Chinese architecture, landscape and vegetation and Chinese opera characters.
* LiLi features four magnificent green Campan marble columns – this marble is extremely rare, and the quarry, located in the Pyrénées, is now closed.

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**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS – 13**

* The aviation-themed L’Oiseau Blanc restaurant celebrates the venture of ex-World War flying aces Charles Nungesser and François Coli who attempted to cross the Atlantic in 1927 from Le Bourget.
* The Oiseau Blanc was named following Charles Nungesser’s appearances in flying circuses around the USA demonstrating his WW 1 fighter prowess. A Native American chief refused to let him fly over his reservation, and so Nungesser offered to take him up in his plane. Amazed by his flight, he relented and Nungesser named his next plane after him – White Bird.
* A replica of the Oiseau Blanc Levasseur PL8 biplane, 75% of the original size and with a wingspan of 11 metres, hangs in the Oiseau Blanc courtyard. The replica was built in Newquay, England.
* A restored 1927 Levasseur engine takes pride of place in the restaurant. This has been restored and rebuilt from parts of three original engines at Le Bourget - a labour of love by a group of enthusiastic volunteers comprising retired aviation engineers, working one day a week on the project.
* Continuing its long-standing relationship with Peninsula, Bernardaud created the chinaware for the L’Oiseau Blanc, with a bespoke design featuring the plane, designed by Catherine Bergen, Bernardaud’s Director of Collections, who also created the chinaware for Gaddi’s French restaurant at The Peninsula Hong Kong in 1994.
* Celebrated cheese affineurs Les Frères Marchands - one of France’s oldest specialist cheesemongers dating from 1860, and with brothers Philippe, Patrice and Eric at the helm today as the sixth generation – have created an bespoke cheese for The Peninsula Paris. Inspired by the roses used throughout the hotel, the exclusive cheese brings together the fresh taste of goat’s cheese and the subtle aroma of the signature Peninsula rose.

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**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS – 14**

* Founded in 1830, Christofle expresses French spirit and lifestyle. The Christofle archives show orders for large silver trays and serving platters from the original hotel in 1908, while today Christofle crystal glassware at Le Bar Kléber, and Champagne buckets and other table top items in L’Oiseau Blanc continue the tradition. Meanwhile the early 20th century-design “Albi” tea set, together with a miniature version for hot chocolate for children, takes pride of place in The Peninsula Suite and The Katara Suite.

**Peninsula People…**

* During the recruitment process in 2013 and 2014, the hotel’s human resource department was receiving 100 CVs per day.
* General Manager Nicolas Béliard personally met every one of the 600 employees for an interview and to welcome them to the Peninsula family.

**All kinds of everything**

* **The Art of Hospitality** - A unique collection of specially curated contemporary artworks is showcased throughout the hotel. Major installations include “The World Belongs to Me” by internationally celebrated artist Ben Jakober and “Moon River” by Xavier Corberó – widely recognised as Spain’s foremost living sculptor, together with other works throughout the hotel by internationally acclaimed artists and sculptors.
* **Green fingers** – The original hotel was one of the very few hotels in Paris to have its own roof garden. Still a rarity in Paris, The Peninsula has recreated five rooftop gardens, with exclusive access and private staircases from The Katara Suite and courtyard suites respectively. Two more small gardens are found on the ground floor courtyards, while the rooftop and La Terrasse Kléber terraces also feature lush seasonal greenery. The flower beds are watered by an extensive underground irrigation system.

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**THE PENINSULA PARIS – FASCINATING FACTS – 15**

**About Katara Hospitality**

Katara Hospitality is a global hotel owner, developer and operator, based in Qatar. With over 40 years’ experience in the industry, Katara Hospitality actively pursues its strategic expansion plans by investing in peerless hotels in Qatar while growing its collection of iconic properties in key international markets. Katara Hospitality has set a target of owning and / or managing 30 hotels by 2016 and 30 more over the following decade. Aiming to become one of the leading hospitality organisations in the world, the company is supporting Qatar’s long term economic vision.

Katara Hospitality currently owns properties spread across three continents, in Qatar, Singapore, The Maldives, Switzerland, France, Italy, Egypt, Morocco, The Gambia and the Union of Comoros. While partnering with some of the finest hotel operators, Katara Hospitality also owns its own operator brands: The Bürgenstock Selection and Merweb Hotels.

[www.katarahospitality.com](http://www.katarahospitality.com)

**About The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels, Limited (HSH)**

Incorporated in 1866 and listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange (00045), The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels, Limited is the holding company of a group which is engaged in the ownership, development, and management of prestigious hotels and commercial and residential properties in key locations in Asia, the United States and Europe, as well as the provision of tourism and leisure, club management and other services. The Peninsula Hotels portfolio comprises The Peninsula Hong Kong, The Peninsula Shanghai, The Peninsula Beijing, The Peninsula Tokyo, The Peninsula New York, The Peninsula Chicago, The Peninsula Beverly Hills, The Peninsula Bangkok, The Peninsula Manila and The Peninsula Paris (expected opening in 2014). Projects under development include The Peninsula London and The Peninsula Yangon. The property portfolio of the group includes The Repulse Bay Complex, The Peak Tower, The Peak Tramways and St. John’s Building in Hong Kong; The Landmark in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; the Thai Country Club in Bangkok, Thailand, and 21 avenue Kléber in Paris, France.

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