

Gallivanter's Gossip



FROM READING YOUR MANY excellent e-mails regarding your recent experiences in hotels throughout Europe, I am beginning to wonder if European hotels can ever be relied on to maintain standards. The most shocking feedback concerns **Capella Castlemartyr**, near Cork, which appears to have imploded on every level since its opening last year, partly due to the downturn in the Irish economy, but also, I suspect, from owner problems. Interestingly, I just heard that GM, Peter Bowling, has left to open Capella Pedregal in Cabo san Lucas. In the UK, you say that standards have slipped at **Summer Lodge in Dorset**, and that taking your kids to **Chewton Glen** in July is not a great experience (an hour's wait for a plate of spaghetti?). Maybe they should stick to adults only. Conversely, you are hyperventilating with pleasure about the just-opened **Four Seasons Florence**, but should we have to rely on Four Seasons to get it right in Europe? Not always, it seems. **Hotel Rosa Alpina** in the Dolomites is showing everyone how a family business should be run.

IRELAND, AS WITH MUCH OF EUROPE, is suffering from the current credit crunch, so sensible hotels are bringing in their top people to ensure that quality comes first. **The Ritz-Carlton Powerscourt**, County Wicklow, near Dublin, has secured one of Ritz-Carlton's top General Managers. Allan Federer has left the group's Millennia property in Singapore, after completing its major refurbishment, and now heads the Irish hotel.

FANS OF THE IDYLIC FRENCH ISLAND of Ile de Ré (off the west coast of France, across the bridge from La Rochelle) will be interested to note that Olivia Mathé, the wife of Ex-Four Seasons George V, Paris General Manager, Didier le Calvez, owns the gem-like **L'Hôtel de Toiras**, which has just created three exceptional new seaview rooms of immense style and quality (Can we see a little le Calvez influence here?). 'George Washington' is my favourite, but all three look tempting. Dinner can be custom cooked, according to the day's fresh market produce and your desire. Simple, yes, but isn't that what luxury is all about these days? www.hotel-de-toiras.com

TALKING OF FOUR SEASONS GEORGE V, PARIS, can anyone compete? Well, everyone is trying, it seems. The latest high-end group to enter the fray is Peninsula, who will open **The Peninsula Paris** mid-2012 on posh Avenue Kleber, just off the Champs Elysées.

WHILST IN GENEVA THIS SUMMER, we had dinner at the outstanding **Auberge du Lion d'Or**, which overlooks the lake at Cologny. Owned by 2-star-Michelin Chefs, Gilles Dupont (ex Executive Chef of Hôtel du Rhône - see right) and Irishman, Thomas Byrne, the cuisine here is so good that you almost weep with pleasure. The 6-course Menu Summer Exuberance, from Ratatouille foam; to Grilled Langoustines with salad of peach, melon, fennel and almonds pepper-mint trait (see right) and Strawberries Garriguettes, was stunning. Do go. www.liondor.ch



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