

# A flying career for alumni of The Swiss School of Tourism and Hospitality (SSTH)

**The hospitality industry is one of the fastest-growing industry sectors world-wide. As a booming industry, diverse career opportunities continue to flourish on a global scale and the industry continues to attract new talent who are passionate, well-educated and well trained.**

The Swiss School of Tourism and Hospitality (SSTH), part of the Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL) Group and Swiss Hotel Association, is a College of Applied Sciences that offers a fascinating international atmosphere. Students not only benefit from top hands-on experience, but also from a high level of academic education preparing them for successful careers.

With SSTH having an active alumni network of over 5,000 in around 100 countries and EHL, the parent company of SSTH with 25,000+ in 120 countries, there is a high probability that you are likely to meet an alumni somewhere in the world, working in either a general business capacity or within the high-end of the hospitality industry.

In a series of recent interviews with SSTH alumni, we take a glimpse into the professional lives and careers of two SSTH alumni, Nina Brandanger and Fredrik Jonsson. They share memories of studying at SSTH and offer their views on the global hospitality industry.

**Fredrik Jonsson**, left his home country of Sweden almost 20 years ago to study at SSTH in 1997. He never imagined he would not return, nor did he imagine the type of international managerial career he would follow after graduating from SSTH.



Looking back, Fredrik recalls what first drew him to the hospitality industry.

Before I had even heard of SSTH, I worked at the Grand Hotel in Stockholm where I realized my passion for the hospitality industry. There were so many diverse roles in the hotel – it was so exciting!

At the time, many of my colleagues had gone to, or were planning to enter into the hospitality educational field – and then the penny dropped! If I were to get a foot hold on the managerial career ladder, I would also have to study further.

## **Why did you choose SSTH?**

Mainly based on recommendations from friends and family and also the fact that SSTH was acknowledged by the Swedish Educational system, which allowed me to secure financial funding. Of course now, SSTH is accredited by the Swiss federal Government and recognized in many different countries too. Another factor which attracted me was the diverse range of subjects on offer such as Financial and Managerial Accounting, Economics, International Hotel Management and F&B control in addition to the excellent hands-on training and internship opportunities.

## **What was your first job after leaving SSTH?**

Following graduation, I joined [Melia Hotels International](#) at their headquarters in Palma de Mallorca where I initially worked alongside the GM at one of the hotel assets in Palma, before moving into the Feasibility Department where we undertook market feasibility studies and due diligence work. Still at Melia, I diversified again and moved to the Development Division where my role was to expand the brands foot print, initially for Spain, Germany and Benelux, then into Europe, Middle East and North Africa.

## **What experience did you gain at Melia Hotels International?**

Over the 7 year period I really did gain a global understanding of corporate hotel chain operations. The career path I followed there also meant I travelled internationally, visiting prospect hotels, allowing me to get not only market insight but to develop a huge network of contacts. Finally though, I was sponsored by the company to study an Executive MBA at the Instituto de Empresa in Madrid.”

## What did you do after Melia?

During the last two years at Melia I was responsible for the group's development activities in the Middle East and I got a taste for the dynamic and ever developing city of Dubai, where I met my wife Shoshanna. Early 2007 until 2010, I joined Majid Al Futtaim Groups hospitality Division in Dubai, overseeing hospitality real estate acquisitions and development activities for UAE and Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. I was head hunted to join Qatari Diar in Doha, Qatar, again real estate and development, overseeing the company's hospitality holding. Interestingly this role took me back to Switzerland because at the time we had the ownership of the [Schweizerhof Bern](#), the [Burgenstock Resort, Luzern](#), as well as the [Royal Savoy, Lausanne](#). The highlight for me though, was the acquisition of the [Raffles Hotel Singapore](#) which will always be the icon of the luxury hotel business.



*Views from the Burgenstock Resort: Left to right: Fredrik Jonsson and Bruno Schöpfer, Managing Director of Katara Hospitality Switzerland AG.*

Fredrik continued his fabulous career where he was again, head-hunted and joined Investment Corporation of Dubai to establish and manage the Hospitality Asset Management function of the Group.

### **How do you fit a family life into such a challenging career life?**

“Most definitely, my career keeps me busy, but my wife, Shoshanna with whom I met in 2007 has been a real support. Now with two beautiful children, aged of 6 and 4, I am not only entertained at work but at home too.”

With almost 20 years of experience dealing with operators, owners and developers of hotel real estate, Fredrik now has his own boutique hotel advisory firm, MEREHA, providing strategic advice to owners and developers of the

hospitality industry.

Getting back to where it all started, SSTH, Fredrik looks back fondly on his SSTH days and the close relationships he had with his fellow classmates at SSTH.

“I'm still in touch with some of my classmates and former faculty, mainly through social media. You can't help but recount some of the stories of the long nights in the Student Night Club and the endless fun on the slopes. Fun aside, I have been so fortunate to have had such career opportunities and I always say, one should expect and be prepared for the unexpected in the hospitality industry.”

