

VOL. 15 NO. 15 AUGUST 7-20, 2006

THE NEWSPAPER FOR LODGING DECISION MAKERS

HOTEL BUSINESS[®]

Auberge Broadens Its Horizons With Plans For New Solage Brand

BY STEFANI C. O'CONNOR

MILL VALLEY, CA— Auberge Resorts, which has carved a niche as the owner/manager of small, eclectic properties at the ultra-luxury level, is widening its position with the launch of a new hotel concept: Solage Hotels and Resorts.

The brand is deliberately designed as a departure from the company's high-end offerings, which include its flagship Auberge du Soleil, Calistoga Ranch (both in the Napa Valley); Esperanza Resort, Cabo San Lucas, Mexico; and The Inn at Palmetto Bluff in Bluffton, SC. The new effort will target a broader base of guests with hotels that offer a contemporary style and price point approximately 50% lower than its existing hotels.

The first Solage, which is corporate owned, already is under construction in the Napa Valley.

The 89-cottage Solage Calistoga will be a full-service resort and is slated to open next May proximate Calistoga Ranch, which has 46 guest lodges and 27 private residences.

"We wanted to make it a little more approachable, we wanted to differentiate it from the other properties that are a very highly rated business and we wanted it to be someplace that had

a little more lively, younger kind of atmosphere, with a lot of sports, a great gym, a hiking program and bicycles," said Mark Harmon, Auberge Resorts' principal/CEO.

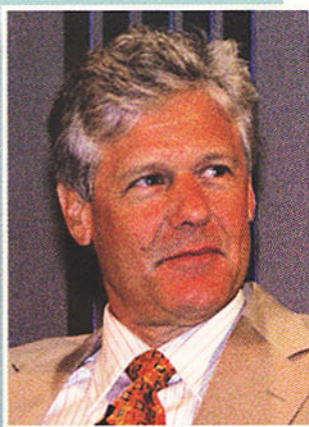
The 25-acre resort will cater to a variety of contemporary guests' needs. For example, a 130-foot pool surrounded by cabanas will be one of the focal points. A restaurant and bar will open onto outdoor terraces, and guests may gather at fire pits or try their hand at the bocce ball courts.

In terms of food, Harmon noted: "It's not going to be the five-star dining experience that we have at Auberge du Soleil; it's going to be fun food, healthy, superb local product and cuisine."

Another key feature will be the proprietary Solage Spa, where guests can recall pioneer times at the mud bar, a treatment that places them on marble slabs where they're then coated with locally gathered volcanic mud. They may also soak in pools harnessing the areas geothermal springs.

The executive said the company was being opportunistic in locating the first Solage in Calistoga, although getting to this point has been in the works for some time.

"It's always difficult in California to get properties entitled and approved, so after about seven or eight years we finally got approvals...We realized what a great opportunity it was in Calistoga to move forward with an emphasis on wellness—the mud bath, the geothermal springs—all these things that resonate with people now...We got excited because



Mark Harmon
Auberge Resorts

continued on page 39

