

# family travel Trends

**recommend**

helping travel advisors sell travel

L A C O L E C C I Ó N  
RESORTS BY FIESTA AMERICANA

 **FAMILY  
TRAVEL  
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Changing Lives Through Travel

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HOTEL GROUP



**F**amily travel is a \$160 billion industry in the U.S. and it's growing faster than other travel segments. Twenty-first century families are exploring the globe, not just their own backyard. They are curious and adventurous; they want to visit the beautiful, exotic destinations that are splashed across Instagram; they want to sail the rivers—yes, river cruising is hot with families—and oceans of the world.... That said, they still want to do the conventional trips to theme parks, beach resorts, national parks, and cities, so don't write those off your recommendations list.

For this *Family Travel Trends* report—a complement to the *Family Travel Trends Survey* conducted on **recommend.com**, as well as the *Family Travel Trends Webinar*—we reached out to experts in the family travel segment to gain insight into what family travelers want and help you better sell to this growing market.



Today's families, says Melissa da Silva, president of **Trafalgar**, **Brendan Vacations** and **Costsaver**, "are better informed, connected personally and digitally to other family travelers and have excellent resources at their disposal, from travel advisor partners to organizations such as the **Family Travel Association**." Adds Richard Moss, trade sales manager, USA, **Saint Lucia Tourism Authority**, "families are also traveling and being more open to authentic travel and being hands-on—not just in terms of extreme sports, but also highly interactive experiences. Culinary themes are also popular and, most of all, voluntourism is a trend of today's families, which are no doubt passing on the values of social responsibility." Dondra Ritzenthaler, sr. v.p. of sales, trade support and service for **Celebrity Cruises**, points to Millennials and how they are reshaping family travel, noting that "these [Millennial] families value travel as a form of education, and opening up the world for their children is an essential way to open up their minds and also create long-lasting memories through shared experiences, family bonding." Travel advisor Susan Farewell, owner of **Farewell Travels LLC**, says that yes, families are "keenly aware of

the educational value of travel, but also want to be able to relax and be serendipitous as a family," adding that "young families really want us to schedule a lot for them. They ask us to design each day, making sure they have everything planned out in advance."

And Pilar Arizmendi-Stewart, v.p. of sales and marketing, the Americas for **Palladium Hotel Group**, notes that these young families "seek destinations not only for their 'Instagram-worthiness,' but for the

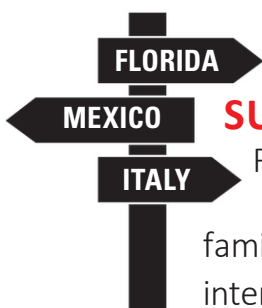
experiences they would have—whether that's a unique excursion or a truly luxurious VIP experience." Summing it all up, travel advisor Rhonda Day, a **Dream Vacations** franchise owner, says that no matter the size or shape of the family, "families want an action-packed experience with lots to do for all ages. With the economy doing well, some families are willing to spend big money to get an experience, but they expect to be 'wowed' when doing so."



## SELLING TO SINGLE FAMILIES

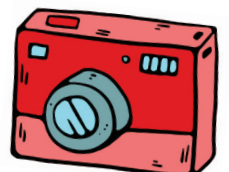
"A single family is already on a tight budget because there is only one income coming into the household. When they say their budget is no more than \$3k, as the agent, you really need to stick to that. They aren't like other clients that can maybe go a little bit over."

— Quiana L. Thomas, Owner & Operator, Girls Getaway 360 Vacations



## SURVEY SAYS:

Florida, Hawaii, Alaska, California & the National Parks are TOP U.S. destinations for families. The Caribbean, Mexico, & Italy are TOP international destinations for families.



# What's All the Buzz About



When asked about trends in family travel, experts responded with everything from more off-the-beaten-path destinations, as well as exotic ones, to truly authentic experiences. And that word “authentic” is key to making today’s family happy while traveling. **Big Five Tours & Expeditions’** president Ashish Sanghrajka says that “families are willing to step out of their comfort zones, traveling to unique destinations more often to find the real, authentic experience,” with Da Silva adding that “all travelers want real, genuine experiences that bring them closer to the places and people they are visiting.” Travel advisor Amie O’Shaughnessy, CEO of **Ciao Bambino! Inc.**, adds that “families want to pair seeing major landmarks with more off-the-grid local experiences.”

In fact, local experiences are top of mind for many families, with “charity/voluntourism and local impact” being a top trend, as Moss points out. In other words, it’s “engagement with purpose,” says Sanghrajka, with Enrique Calderon, COO of **Posadas**,

adding that families are “engaging in cultural experiences to learn about the destination’s origins, culture and customs.” Parents want their kids to be more “globally aware,” says a representative from the **Costa Rica Tourism Board**, “so they are seeking destinations where their children can learn about and immerse themselves in a new culture outside of their classroom.”

Today’s families want to truly dive into a destination, and not only learn about it, but get their hands “dirty,” so to speak. In fact, travel advisor Kim Goldstein, president of **Journeys Inc.**, points to “active destinations,” as a major buzz theme, with Calderon noting that “one emerging trend is adventuring while in a destination, whether it’s hopping on a Jeep ride to capture the best view of a full moon, or taking a kayak ride in the middle of the jungle. Family members of all ages are craving adrenaline.” The representative from the Costa Rica Tourism Board notes that “adventure is an important and popular niche in family travel because it encourages family bonding and a healthy lifestyle through active experiences found in nature.”

And “food continues to play an important role in family travel,” says **AmaWaterways’** executive v.p. and co-owner Kristin Karst. “Travel gives people the opportunity to explore different things...and we’ve seen children branch out and try our authentic dishes inspired by regional

“The all-inclusive concept is gaining popularity among family travelers as it facilitates the day-to-day transactions and allows for more time to spend with loved ones.”

-- Ricardo Orozco, Vice President of Operations, Solmar Hotels & Resorts

and local flavors,” Karst adds. “Needless to say, their parents are thrilled!” Moss points out, though, that it’s not only about trying local fare, “folks also want to learn how to make and collect recipes.”

Richard D’Ambrosio, communications director for the **Family Travel Association**, has a more general outlook when it comes to what’s trending with family travelers. He says, “Families are looking for destinations and suppliers that satisfy a variety of their family’s interests, especially family entertainment that everyone can enjoy together. We think that is one of the reasons why cruises are so popular with families, especially the newer, larger ships that offer everything from go-kart racing, to Broadway musicals, to every cuisine imaginable.”



## ALL-INCLUSIVE RESORTS

Almost half of the survey respondents point to this type of travel as the most popular among their family clients.

“As we are increasingly glued to our screens, families are seeking destinations that allow them to disconnect peacefully from the outside world to reconnect with each other.”

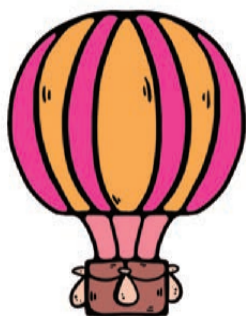
-- Pilar Arizmendi-Stewart, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, the Americas, Palladium Hotel Group



# Today's Multigenerational Family



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The multigenerational family travel phenomenon is here to stay is what all the experts we interviewed say emphatically. There are many reasons for this, of course, but one of the main factors driving this is what D'Ambrosio points to: "The 65-year-old of today is more like the 55-year-old of 25 years ago, and they have the desire and ability to both plan vacations with their children's families, but also skip-gen now, too, where they are taking only their grandchildren on a trip so that they can make a special connection with them."

The experts point out that the industry has upped the ante to accommodate a larger family group, with more personalization, more amenities to cater to all in the family, and more spacious accommodations, such as connecting rooms on board river cruise ships and the growing popularity of villas, because, as Goldstein points out, families want to have "close accommodations and a common area where they can spend time together." In fact, Moss says that for this market

"we see a soaring trend with private villas, villa resorts and also self-contained options that includes a chef and facilities to throw down in the kitchen or in the private pool without disturbing other clients."

Once they are out exploring, what these multigenerational or skip-gen groups want is personalization, for suppliers to satisfy their every desire with a plethora of choices, or as Karst mentions, "they want options that cater to everyone's interests and activity level, from the youngest member to the most senior." And they are "embracing and embarking on more complicated adventures together," says O'Shaughnessy. "It doesn't mean they don't value convenience, they do, which is why things like river cruising is growing in popularity for this group, but they are willing to do increasingly adventurous things together, opting for bucket list trips to places like the Galapagos, Africa, and Australia/New Zealand."

**“ [Intergenerational travel] is really about families getting away together, not simply about having grandparents foot the cost of travel. ”**

**– Melissa da Silva, President, Trafalgar, Brendan Vacations, & Costsaver**

**“ Multigen travel is a powerful trend that's here to stay. ”**

**-- Enrique Calderon, COO, Posadas**



# Kids Rule!



**“The younger members [in a family] are set to become the largest consumer generation by 2020.”**  
-- Kristin Karst, Executive Vice President and Co-Owner, AmaWaterways



Undoubtedly, grandparents and the older generation in a family play a crucial role in travel planning, but where do kids fit into all of this? Without doubt, young children and teens are continuing to have more say in where a family travels to, and what they do in a destination. Why? “We all want to go where kids love to go,” says Calderon, with Farewell adding that, “parents see the benefit of exposing their kids to different cultures and experiences. Travel inspires kids to want to learn about places. Where ancient Athens may be boring to some 11-year-old, if the child has actually seen the Acropolis, it can be very meaningful.” Sanghrajka concurs, pointing out that “prior generations may have wanted to know how to own the world, but now kids want to know how to help the world. These kinds of experiences offer education for kids that a textbook could never bring alive.”

And so because parents want to expose their children to all these sorts of experiences, they are allowing the children to be part of the decision-making, with Goldstein saying that although the “parents typically make the decision, it seems to be with some discussion with the children,” and, adds O’Shaughnessy, “as kids get older, they are more discerning in terms of what they enjoy. Parents of tweens and teens don’t want to struggle with their kids while on the road, so as kids get older, parents do seek feedback to match preferences with experiences.” D’Ambrosio notes that in the *Family Travel Association’s US Family Travel Survey 2018*, conducted in partnership with the NYUSPS Jonathan M. Tisch Center of Hospitality, “55 percent of the parents responding agreed with the statement that their children are more engaged in their family’s vacation planning as a result of previous family trips, and 56 percent of parents say their children actually assist in gathering information for the planning process.”

## DO CHILDREN HAVE A STRONG INFLUENCE ON VACATION DECISIONS?

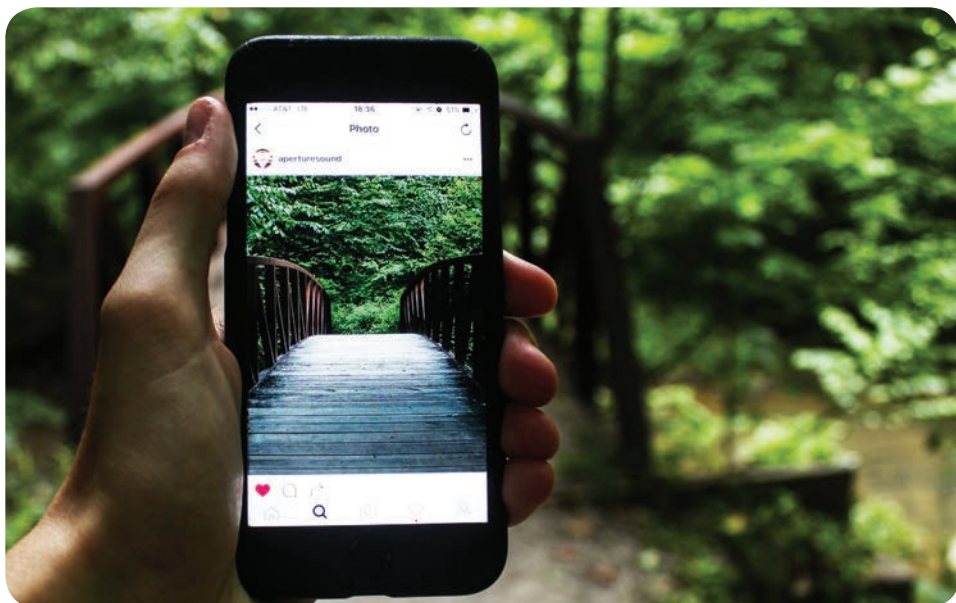
More than 60% of survey respondents say they “agree,” while a little over 10% said they “strongly agree.”



**“Kids are definitely a large part of the decision-making and help bake the proverbial cake, inspiring destination ideas and sharing experiences they want to have. Kids today are very worldly and travel savvy.”**

– Dondra Ritzenthaler, Senior Vice President of Sales, Trade Support and Service, Celebrity Cruises





More than half of survey respondents say that it is “likely” and “very likely” that their family clients are choosing their vacation destination based on something they saw on social media.

## The Impact of Social Media

There’s no denying that what has led to the increase in children being an influence in family vacations plans is social media. “Social media has opened the eyes of kids more than they’ve ever been before,” says Da Silva. “Disney still might be the most aspirational place to visit for young children, but the viral videos of the exotic ‘Pink Lake’ in Australia or their favorite YouTube stars vlogging their vacation through Italy is giving teens a new motivation.” It’s certainly a player in travel plans, says Karst, because “there are many opinions and reviews online that influence decisions as families prepare for their next vacation.” In fact, says Arizmendi-Stewart, “social media has expanded the possibility of travel tenfold! We see families documenting their time together like never before, which allows their friends and followers to experience destinations secondhand.”

It’s all about the cache of sharing something that’s different than their peers, says the representative from the Costa Rica Tourism Board, noting that the “younger generations want to share similar or more unique experiences than their friends.” In other words, they are “building social currency amongst friends,” states Ritzenthaler, with Calderon adding

that families want to show they were at “the best international beach destination, and social media is the perfect channel to do so.”

D’Ambrosio, though, doesn’t fully agree that social media has that much of an impact, stating

that “the inspiration and planning phase of getting there is mostly driven by person-to-person interaction, and it’s so important for agents to understand how they can insert themselves into those conversations.”



**“Social media helps us aspire, even on a subconscious level. It drives travel envy.”**

-- Richard Moss, Trade Sales Manager,  
USA, Saint Lucia Tourism Authority



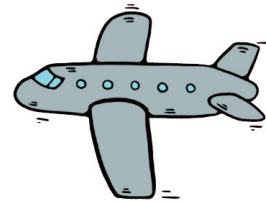


# The Role of the Travel Advisor

As Da Silva mentioned at the beginning of this piece, today's families have many resources available to them, including travel advisors—they are, she says, "time-crunched families' single best asset." In fact, says Karst, "With so many options to choose from, families are looking for convenience and personalization when planning their trip, making travel agents the perfect resource." Moss agrees, stating that, "travel advisors are critical in helping today's travelers wade through the vast options available."

O'Shaughnessy adds that "travel advisors are armed with the most reliable feedback of all—direct assessment from families experiencing these products continually. What hotels have the best room configurations for families? What companies have the best guides for different age groups? What activities are best-suited for families in different destinations? We have the answers to these questions at our fingertips." Our role, says Farewell, is "critical. We do five-year travel plans for our clients and it is so important. When a young family starts out and sits with a financial advisor, they have to look at everything from college savings to planning wills. Travel has to be figured in there, so it can be budgeted accordingly. If a family doesn't plan out ahead, they will inevitably spend more money making last-minute, 'got to get away for school vacation' trips."

In other words, travel advisors deliver, and with the family travel segment growing in scope, now is the time to dive in.



**"The travel advisor can provide insight we as a traveler don't have going in."**

-- Ashish Sanghrajka,  
President, Big Five Tours  
& Expeditions

**"Travel advisors are more than the vacation planner for a family. They are almost more a family therapist, trying to understand the multi-faceted personality of a family, what everyone's interests are and what will make them happy."**

-- Richard D'Ambrosio, Communications  
Director, Family Travel Association

## 7-13 NIGHTS

Average number of nights families are spending on their vacation, according to half of the survey respondents.



“It’s the one time of the year, the whole family can be together.”

Survey respondents say this is one of the top reasons their clients are traveling with their children.



## IBCCES Certified Autism Center Organizations

The Certified Autism Center (CAC) designation recognizes organizations that have successfully completed extensive training from leading autism experts. Each CAC ensures all families with autism and other sensory disorders are properly accommodated. Here’s a partial list of certified organizations:

- **DISCOVERY COVE**
- **AQUATICA ORLANDO**
- **DOLPHIN COVE OCHO RIOS**
- **BEACHES RESORTS**
- **SESAME PLACE**
- **GRAND PALLADIUM BAVARO SUITES RESORTS & SPA IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**
- **SPACE CENTER HOUSTON**
- **VILLAKEY**
- **SAWGRASS MARRIOTT GOLF RESORT & SPA**

You can become a Certified Autism Professional, and tap into a \$262 billion underserved market. Visit [edu.recommend.com](http://edu.recommend.com).

“The biggest hurdle I’ve had when booking travel for families with special needs is getting the family to feel comfortable enough to take the leap to travel as a family in the first place. So many families come to me and say, ‘We want to try and take a vacation as a family, but we just don’t think it’s possible due to our family member’s disability. Do you think we can do it?’ And for most families, the answer is YES! //”  
– Nicole Thibault, Owner, Magical Storybook Travels

Some of the experts we spoke with point to Costa Rica a top destination for families.



So where are families jetting off to? We asked the experts who were interviewed for this report and these were some of their responses (in no particular order):

**MEXICO**

**HAWAII**

**THE CARIBBEAN**

**WALT DISNEY WORLD**

**GALAPAGOS**

**KENYA**

**TANZANIA**

**AUSTRALIA**

**GREECE**

**IRELAND**

**ITALY**

**COSTA RICA**

**JAPAN**

**NEW ZEALAND**

**CALIFORNIA**

**NEW YORK**

**ICELAND**

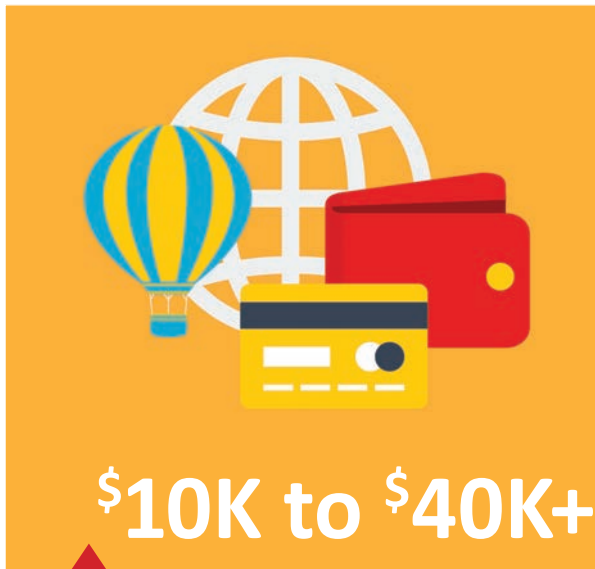
## Get Certified!

Want to dig deep into the growing family travel business? The Family Travel Association offers the FTA Academy, an agent training and certification program that focuses on family travel. It’s a 23-module, video-based training program that helps advisors gain the knowledge needed to serve the needs and unique challenges of traveling families. Visit [edu.recommend.com](http://edu.recommend.com).





**SUMMERTIME**  
Half of the survey respondents say that summer is the time of year that their family clients travel the most.



**\$10K to \$40K+**



About 30 percent of the survey respondents point to this amount when asked how much their family clients are spending on vacation.



### LGBT FAMILY TRAVELERS

*Travel advisors who are thinking of delving into the LGBT market must educate themselves on LGBT-friendly destinations where their client will feel accepted and not fearful of who they are.*

*- Kelli Carpenter, Travel Advisor & Co-Founder, R Family Vacations*

### LGBT-Friendly Destinations

#### INTERNATIONAL

LONDON  
TEL AVIV  
MYKONOS  
AMSTERDAM  
PUERTO VALLARTA  
BARCELONA  
COSTA RICA  
PUERTO RICO  
CAPE TOWN

#### DOMESTICALLY

PALM SPRINGS  
FT. LAUDERDALE  
KEY WEST  
OGUNQUIT  
PROVINCETOWN  
THE HAMPTONS  
SOUTH BEACH  
REHOBOTH BEACH  
NEW YORK  
CHICAGO  
LAS VEGAS



As part of Mexico's leading hotel group, La Colección Resorts by Fiesta Americana boasts 14 distinctive resorts in the most desired beach destinations on the Caribbean and Pacific coasts of Mexico, as well as our first urban resort in San Miguel de Allende, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Each brand caters to every traveler's vacation dream, whether it is a luxury, adults-only, all-inclusive, soft adventure or family vacation experience. Every Live Aqua, Grand Fiesta Americana, Fiesta Americana and The Explorean resort offers a unique and amazing experience and caters to every traveler's vacation dream, whether it is luxury, cultural, adults-only, all-inclusive, soft adventure or family-oriented.

Each La Colección resort offers outstanding service and settings that help create memorable moments: elegant rooms and suites, multiple gourmet restaurants and lounges, 24-hour in-room dining, premium beverages, upscale amenities, including innovative Kids and Teens Club at Fiesta Americana Resorts and the impressive Kidz Club at one of the best kid-friendly resort in México at Grand Fiesta Americana Coral Beach 40,000 square feet of stimulating fun. Cooking classes, a pretend city, reading nooks in the jungle, a computer lab, an open play theater with plenty of costumes, an arts and crafts room, a water park, a basketball hoop, and plenty of other indoor and outdoor surprises specially created for our guests ages 3 to 12 years old.

Small groups are motivated by detailed packages that create unforgettable reunions for every special occasion, including private in room parties with hors d'oeuvres and cocktails, group dinners at specialty restaurants, professional group photos, spa services, decorations, and more. The perfect mix to celebrate birthdays, weddings, girlfriend getaways, bachelor or bachelorette trips, and more.

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Attractive incentives to travel agents part of La Colección Rewards.

We are the only hotel group to pay upon booking (30 days) and not upon arrival of guests. Direct bookings on individual reservations or groups of up to 25 will receive:

- Cash payment up to \$100 usd per booking
- Free Nights per 3 night booking
- Up to \$2500 for group booking

**[lacoleccionresorts.com](http://lacoleccionresorts.com) / 1 800 FIESTA1**

# PALLADIUM

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## H O T E L   G R O U P

### **How Palladium Hotel Group is Elevating Family Travel**

Palladium Hotel Group recently introduced Family Selection at the Grand Palladium Vallarta Resort & Spa and Grand Palladium Costa Mujeres Resort & Spa. Family Selection is a designated, privileged area especially for VIP families. It offers guests unique luxury rooms, personalized services, special amenities, and exclusive facilities such as The Nest a la carte restaurant, pool with waiter service, and lounge area.

In suite, Family Bosses are treated to amenities including mini bathrobes and slippers, a prepared bubble bath with water toys, milk and cookies turndown service, a personalized mini-bar with special beverages, and more. Children and teens also have access to exclusive enriching activities, such a video game zone, cooking classes and arts & crafts activities.

Family Selection adults also receive special amenities, including 24-hour room service, unpacking and packing services, priority restaurant reservations and complimentary admission to the hydrotherapy area of Zentropia Palladium Spa & Wellness center. They have direct access to a Family Host, who can assist with reservations and special requests.

Additionally, the Grand Palladium Bavaro Suites Resort & Spa (Punta Cana, Dominican Republic) recently became a Certified Autism Center (CAC) to help ensure guests and families with children who have autism have the best possible experience. Parents with children on the autism spectrum often find vacationing to be challenging due to sensory needs, dietary restrictions and safety concerns. The resort implemented a training and certification program provided by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) to receive the CAC designation.

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Palladium Hotel Group operates Grand Palladium Hotels & Resorts, all-inclusive resorts offering luxurious services for families, couples, and groups, as well as a range of services for business travelers or wedding guests. Guests are the brand's top priority. There are 10 Grand Palladium Hotels & Resorts throughout Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica.

**<https://fmlink.me/4uF>**

### **Social Media Handles**

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/PalladiumHotelGroup/>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/PalladiumHotels>