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ISSN 1545-8716 11



By Kristina Roby

THE AMBROSE, SANTA MONICA, CA

GREEN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY PIONEER

Deirdre Wallace is at the forefront of developing "green" hotels. The Ambrose, a beautifully tranquil craftsman-style boutique hotel in Santa Monica, California, Wallace's first signature hotel gone green, hopes to receive the commendations for being the first LEED-EB hotel and one of the first five LEED-certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, the U.S. Green Building Council's benchmark certification) hotels in the United States.

After The Ambrose's successful launch in 2003, the first and only female green hotelier in the U.S. went off the beaten path, taking her conventionally built hotel and crew on a road less traveled, consequently introducing green practices and components into the operations of the hotel.

LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (LEED)

In the green transition of The Ambrose, Deirdre Wallace strictly adheres to LEED standards. "There are no LEED standards set for hotels yet. We followed the LEED for industrial buildings. In fact, we are developing standards for hotels, with The Ambrose, but especially with our new projects."

Consequently, Wallace has become a sought after panelist in the hospitality industry in terms of eco-friendly building and sustainable operation. With The Ambrose, Deirdre Wallace has created a blueprint and model for green hotels, an industry standard that other hotels now strive for.

ULTIMATE GREEN GETAWAY

Nestled in a residential neighborhood, The Ambrose, just a short bike ride to the Pacific Ocean, offers soothing respite within close proximity to the hubs of leading media, entertainment and high technology companies. A naturally designed, landscaped courtyard garden with tiled path leading to a colorfully populated koi pond and wood bench invite guests to unwind and reflect.

As you enter the hotel lobby, you are taken with the serene atmosphere of The Ambrose. The Asian inspired dark wood interiors instantly create a very warm and relaxing mood.



Photo: ©Kevin Mapp

▶▶▶ INTERVIEW WITH DEIRDRE WALLACE, GREEN HOTEL PIONEER

Deirdre Wallace gave us a behind-the-scenes look at what will be one of the first LEED-EB-certified hotels in the U.S., and her exciting plans to green the American hotel landscape.

Natural Living: *Did you envision a "green" hotel, right from the beginning?*

Deirdre Wallace: I actually envisioned a "healthful" hotel! Once we opened, I sort of dove into green building as a direction in which to take the company and this hotel. There really was no other option for me.

NL: *Most of your guests are business people rather than travelers consciously seeking green?*

DW: Even within our business customer base, there are those who stay with us because they know we are green. And then there are those who stay with us because they love the hotel.

NL: *What are your plans for the future?*

DW: We are going to expand The Ambrose as a concept. All new hotels will be built from the ground up to LEED-certification standards. We are looking at other sites in New York and at the West Coast. And we are also launching a management company so we can help other owners operate green hotels.

LEED is pretty stringent. They don't have a LEED for hospitality yet. The idea is that all our hotels will be LEED-certified. We are working on creating certification for "green hotels." We can actually give to the hospitality industry and it will be there for anybody to reference. The whole idea is that we all get greener! And it's good for everybody's business! It shouldn't be just about marketing, it should be for the ultimate benefit of humanity. We have a real opportunity here.

NL: *As a green pioneer and hospitality industry leader, what do you foresee for the future?*

DW: One of the challenges of being a pioneer in the industry is that you have to dig deeper and work harder. I believe in five to ten years from now the whole hospitality industry will be green. Maybe not to the level that The Ambrose is but to a much higher level than it is today. The guests will be a lot more aware of what it means to be green. I am sure a hotel like this and a few others that are already open and running a green operation will assist in getting that message across. I am involved with a group called Global Green; I am on their New York and Los Angeles committees. In the hospitality business I have just recently sat on a few panels, on green operation and on green building. The industry is learning and there are no other companies building and operating green hotels however there are a few brands launching in the future. So we are uniquely positioned to influence green hospitality even though we are comparatively a small company. It is a very exciting time to be green. ♦



Deirdre Wallace

Photography: CJeff Katz Photography

Fashions: blue 50% Hemp/50% cotton top by DKNY

Jeans by Loomstate, 100% organic cotton. Jewelry: Jennifer Letzes

Stylist: Xavier Cabrera. Hair/Make-up: Barbara Farman

