

# TRAVEL WEEKLY

THE NATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

MAY 28, 2007

## NEWS

### Spa operators convene summit, eye benchmarks for industry

By Nadine Godwin

NEW YORK — Leaders in the spa industry gathered here for the inaugural Global Spa Summit, an event that will probably be remembered as the birthplace of a new spa-industry organization.

Pete Ellis, chairman and CEO of New York-based Spa Finder, spearheaded the meeting of about 150 top executives in the \$40 billion worldwide industry and said Spa Finder would sponsor the annual summits until the new organization is formalized. He said he was talking to candidates for the group's top paid slots.

The group, which also will go by the name Global Spa Summit, will be a by-invitation organization of senior executives, he said. The first summit event, at the Waldorf-Astoria here, was by invitation only.

Ellis said the Global Spa Summit would "encourage investment" in the industry and the standardization of performance data.

To make that point, summit participant

Richard Dusseau, managing partner and president, Spa Strategy, Denver, pointed to other industries. Retailers, he said, look at revenue per square foot and hotels look at RevPAR to describe how they are doing.

In the case of spas, said Anne McCall Wilson, vice president, spas, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts and Raffles Hotels & Resorts, Toronto, "we are not sure what the benchmarks should be."

Another very big issue, Ellis said, is the spa industry's urgent need for qualified managers. "There is no conduit for staffing in this industry, for people who understand both the spa business and hospitality."

He said the group was working with the University of California and was seeking other educational institutions to get involved in developing appropriate programs.

As to sustainability, Anna Bjurstam, managing director, Raison d'Etire, Stockholm, said the group can guide the industry in being more careful with the environment.

Ellis said the Global Spa Summit would



TW PHOTO BY NADINE GODWIN

Industry leaders who attended the inaugural Spa Summit in New York included, from left, Anna Bjurstam, managing director, Raison d'Etire; Richard Dusseau, managing partner and president, Spa Strategy; Anne McCall Wilson, vice president, spas, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts and Raffles Hotels & Resorts; and Pete Ellis, chairman/CEO, Spa Finder (at podium).

complement the existing and larger International Spa Association, which has operations in the U.S., Europe and Asia.

ISPA, he said, is targeted more at the midlevel of the industry and draws thousands to its annual trade shows and is not

equipped to take on the kinds of challenges the new Global Spa Summit aims to tackle.

He said Lynne Walker McNees, ISPA president, and Jim Root, ISPA chairman, were among the delegates to last week's Global Spa Summit.