



WELCOME TO OUR

Les Clefs d'Or Newsletter

IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

- Words from our president, James Ridenour on behalf of the executive committee
- Committee Updates
- Section Updates
- Media Watch Report



The International Newsletter was created to highlight the most interesting and meaningful events happening in our Sections around the world.

Its purpose is to directly connect our global community, showcase the achievements of our members, and share inspiring initiatives that reflect the values of Les Clefs d'Or.

This Newsletter will be distributed to all our members worldwide on a quarterly basis, offering visibility to your Section and strengthening our sense of unity.

With sincere appreciation to all who contributed their time, stories, and photos to this newsletter.

MARCH 2026

Words from our President, James Ridenour on behalf of the Executive Committee

Dear Friends,

Welcome to another edition of the very informative and wonderfully curated Les Clefs d'Or newsletter.

Please take a moment to read all the articles so you can stay informed on all things hospitality and Les Clefs d'Or.

It is a wonderful thing to see service and friendship in action and I thank the Communications Committee members, member sections and members who contributed to the creation of the newsletter.

For those of you joining us in Sydney for our International Congress I look forward to greeting you all personally. I know the team in Australia has been working very hard to prepare for your arrival. The congress promises to be a fantastic event. For those who are unable to join us I look forward to catching up at another event throughout the coming year.

Wishing all our members all the very best in the coming year. Vive Les Clefs d'Or!

In service and friendship,

James Ridenour





Committee Updates

IN THIS SECTION:

- CSR Committee
- Education & Training Committee
- Communication Committee
- Award Committee



CSR COMMITTEE

The CSR committee would like to thank all the Sections who have contributed and made an impact in their communities.

We look forward to presenting of all your efforts at the Open Forum.



We are pleased to announce the CSR activity for the International Congress:

This year's activity will be to attend to the Tierney House. It is a short term transitional house operated by St Vincent Hospital to support homeless individuals needing medical recovery. It is a safe space for post medical care, housing and social services.

Members will be sent in groups of 10 each hour and will be immersed in the daily routines of running this house.

Members will learn how to clear and clean linens and other daily operational duties that are needed to ensure the facility carries out the mission of care. This has helped thousands of people since 2012

A shuttle will take 10 members out each hour starting at 9am and the last bus at 12 noon - max members are 40.



Congress Coloring Books

We are happy to announce the 3rd edition of the beloved CSR coloring books.

The cost of the books are 5 euros.

Proceeds will benefit a notable local charity in Austrailia. A big thank you to Amanda Marks, our artist. Please look for a member of the CSR committee throughout the Congress to purchase your copy. While supplies last....



CSR COMMITTEE

Join us for the Wings of Life World Run May 10th

We hope you will join us for a Global CSR activity called the WINGS OF LIFE WORLD RUN.

This run is unique. All participants worldwide start at the same time and run together against the Catcher Car. 100% of all entry fees and donations go directly to spinal cord research and help find a cure for spinal cord injuries.

The Run takes place on May 10 , 2026 and we would like to thank Florian Muigg for creating a Concierge team.

There is a fee to register, and all the fees go towards spinal cord injury research.

As Concierges, we are defined by our commitment to care, connection and community. This initiative is a powerful opportunity to extend those values beyond our hotels and into the lives who need it most. Together across continents we can create a moment of unity that reflects the very essence of who we are.

Last year, we raised about 800 Euros, and we know we have a lot of runners in our community so please spread the word this year to have as many concierges join the team and create something special together.

JOIN TEAM:

Les Clefs d´Or running concierges

Team: QGk4pQ

<https://www.wingsforlifeworldrun.com/de/teams/QGk4pQ>



VIEW TEAMS IN THE APP

Whether you're in a team or creating your own, discover everything about Teams in the app - chat, track your leaderboard and celebrate together.



INVITE NEW MEMBERS TO YOUR TEAM



"LES CLEFS D'OR" RUNNING CONCIERGES



EDUCATION & TRAINING COMMITTEE

70th UICH Les Clefs d'Or® International Congress – Sydney Education Day Program: “Creating the Indispensable Concierge”

Each year brings new trends and technologies that reshape the way we work. And each year brings us new opportunities to improve our skills, align with emerging tech and trends, and bring an even higher level of service to our guests and our hotels. For the past year, we've been on a journey of discovery...interviewing many of our members and Les Clefs d'Or directors, as well as hospitality industry leaders, trend-setters, technologists, influencers, and educators. The result is a truly exciting and comprehensive deep dive into the latest travel trends, tech innovations, and insights that will shape the concierge profession and the broader hospitality sector today and in the future. All in service to helping us become truly indispensable to our guests and hotels.

The Education & Training Committee in partnership with Education Day sponsor Alliants, is proud to present this program. Bill Brichta of Shape Strategies, a business and innovation consultancy, was engaged to help discover these insights through many interviews with our members and respected industry giants. During the Education Day, Bill along with a team of outstanding guest presenters will take us on an experiential journey of learning that will help move us from beloved, helpful and knowledgeable concierges to being truly indispensable.

The morning sessions will have us exploring the opportunities ahead of us and important pathways of becoming indispensable, including how to Think Like an Owner® as we learn directly from hoteliers: Jane Lyons and Jade Cooper. We explore emerging trends in hospitality that are becoming important factors shaping our future, allowing us to innovate our skills. Our presenters for this section are Tristan Gadsby, speaking about AI, and Gregor Vogel and Jordan Kestle talking about how our own approach to innovation in a time of technological change will help us grow stronger in the future.

Our afternoon sessions begin with a Keynote address by Ashley Fell, a futurist and generational expert who is passionate about helping us make sense of the trends shaping our work, our customers and our future. Following are two interactive workshops that will help us put all the information we've learned into memorable and useful strategies we can use when we get back to our homes and hotels.



EDUCATION & TRAINING COMMITTEE

The first workshop is called “Unlocking your Concierge Superpower” where we explore our superpowers and build scenarios on how our self-discovery will impact our own personal growth, goals and skills, bringing new dimensions of service to our guests and hotels. The second workshop is called “How We Innovate – The Indispensable Concierge” where we bring trend knowledge, Thinking Like an Owner, and our new personalized self-discovery together to ideate and innovate new ways to build great guest experiences once we return to our desks.

Beloved. Ingenious. Knowledgeable. Helpful. Welcoming. Les Clefs d’Or® members are known to be all these things for our guests and hotels in cities and countries worldwide. But there’s one accolade each member must reach to be truly valued and relevant to a traveler’s experience, and that’s...indispensable.

In Service Through Friendship.

Sheron Empey
Chair, Education & Training Committee

Your Incredible Education Committee



Robert Marks
USA



Sheron Empey
Canada



Heather Byron
Sponsor Advisor



Jordan Kestle
Advisor



Michael Romei
Advisor



Harald Mootz
USA



Anna Salgo
Hungary



Petar Yordanov
GB



Bernie Gallotta
Italy



Nick Babcock
Congress Liaison



COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE

Communication is one of the most powerful tools we have as a global community.

The Communication Committee remains steadfast in its purpose to support and elevate the voice of Les Clefs d'Or worldwide.

We would like to take a moment to thank Julie Benhaïm for all her contributions as chairperson for this important committee. Julie has accepted a leadership opportunity within her hotel and we are incredibly proud of her continued growth and success.

With her transition, Angelica Miozza has resumed the role of Chair, and we look forward to continuing our mission with renewed focus and momentum.

Our role is to amplify the achievements of our members, highlight the impact of our profession, and help the world understand the value that Les Clefs d'Or Concierge bring to the guest experience. Whether through media support, social engagement, or collaborative initiatives, we are here to ensure that your stories are told with the distinction they deserve.

As we look ahead, the Communication Committee is focusing its efforts on championing a progressive concierge—one who evolves with the changing landscape of technology while remaining grounded in the timeless values that define our profession.

If ever there is a story, an idea, or even a comment to spread the world we are happy to learn more about it.

Please don't hesitate to contact us at communication@lesclefsdor.org.

We look forward to seeing you all in Sydney.

Please use our Congress tag **#UICHSydney2026** for all your content so we can share!



AWARDS COMMITTEE

Les Clefs d'Or Young Leader Award 2026 in honor of Adolf Schneider

The 17th Annual Les Clefs d'Or Award is in full swing.

We are excited to introduce you to the 19th candidates who will be representing their Sections proudly. Please be sure to get to know them as they are eagerly looking forward to getting to know you.

- **Jimmy BARKER**, Emporium Hotel South Bank, Australia
- **Isabella HABERSAM**, Rosewood Vienna, Austria
- **Gianluca FRAGASSI**, Rocco Forte Hotel Amigo, Belgium
- **Melvin KY**, Wedgewood Hotel and Spa Vancouver, Canada
- **Vincent AUMIS**, Four Seasons Hotel George V, France
- **Lasse ZIMMERMANN**, Breidenbacher Hof Düsseldorf, Germany
- **Dominik WÉBER**, Corinthia Budapest, Hungary
- **Alessia FARINATO**, Belmond Hotel Splendido, Italy
- **Shuta TAKEUCHI**, Aman Tokyo, Japan
- **Unwana VAN DER WERK**, Mandarin Oriental Conservatorium Amsterdam, Netherlands
- **Catarina PAZ SERPA FADISTA**, Four Seasons Hotel Ritz Lisbon, Portugal
- **Aaron Kevin CARIASO**, Park Hyatt Doha, Qatar
- **Idaliya NACAITE**, El Palace Barcelona, Spain
- **Isak LEIMA**, Grand Hôtel Stockholm, Sweden
- **Tanakrit PONGWIJIT**, Carlton Hotel Bangkok Sukhumvit, Thailand
- **Alp Yalcin ALPARSLAN**, Swissôtel The Bosphorus Istanbul, Türkiye
- **Ayoub EL FENNANE**, Mandarin Oriental Jumeira Dubai, United Arab Emirates
- **Silvio FORINO**, Park Hyatt London River Thames, United Kingdom
- **Simona MARCIULAITYTE**, Rancho Valencia Resort and Spa, United States of America



All Candidates Introduction videos can be seen on our social media channels now. Stay tuned as their Les Clefs d'Or history and "Key to the City" articles become available on our VPO and Les Clefs d'Or website.

The Les Clefs d'Or Young Leaders Award 2026 proudly pays tribute to a true pioneer of our profession: **Adolf Schneider**, the first Austrian to serve as International President of UICH (1982–1985). Mr. Schneider epitomized the spirit of hospitality and the art of concierge service.

Mr. Schneider's legacy is nothing short of transformative:

- He led the bold expansion of Les Clefs d'Or into Asia, welcoming new sections like Hong Kong (1982) and Singapore (1986).
- He broke barriers by opening doors to countries behind the "Iron Curtain"—leading to thriving sections in Hungary (1985), Romania (1990), and the Czech Republic (1991).
- In the 1990s, his outstanding dedication was recognized with the Gold Medal of Merit of the Republic of Austria. An honour which is very rare for hotel Concierges in Austria!

Let his story be a beacon for the next generation of concierges: visionary, determined, and always opening new doors.



AWARD COMMITTEE

Celebrating our 2026 Forbes Travel Guide Luxury Star Awardee- Gregor Maximilian Gregor Köck

The **Forbes Travel Guide Summit 2026 in Monaco** was an extraordinary gathering of excellence. During the three-day event in February, FTG recognized the essential contributions of hotel staff and the innovators who continuously elevate the luxury hospitality sector.

This year, Les Clefs d'Or representatives were Brian Mackenzie (1st Vice President), A. Burak, Ipecki (General Secretary), and Gregor Maximilian Köck (2025 Les Clefs d'Or Award Winner).

Gregor Maximilian Köck dazzled the crowd with his acceptance speech after receiving the Les Clef d'Or Young Concierge of the Year presented by Frette.

Köck shared that he comes from a family that works in tourism and that their support and guidance first inspired his career. He mentioned that Les Clefs d'Or is second family where similarly to how The FTE Summit meets annually, when Les Clefs d'Or meet Internationally and we are a network of "different generations, different cultures, and one shared passion....luxury and excellence."

We are so very proud of you Gregor and thank you for representing Les Clefs d'Or on the International stage.

Thank you also to Brian and Burak for strengthening the bond and relationship we have with our Forbes Travel Guide partners.





Section Updates

IN THIS SECTION, WE SHARE
UPDATES FROM :

- Australia
- France
- Germany
- Hellas
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Japan
- Korea
- Portugal
- Russia
- Thailand
- USA



AUSTRALIA

It's time to say G'day!

The 70th International Congress of Les Clefs d'Or will be held from 12 April to 17 April, 2026, in Sydney, Australia. Members from around the globe will be treated to a week of collaboration, learning, and celebration in one of Australia's most iconic cities.

With less than thirty days remaining before we welcome our colleagues to Sydney, preparations are in their final stages. The whole Australian section are working diligently to finalise the details of the program, with a focus on creating an event that is both educational and a celebration for all participants.

We have 500+ delegates registered, along with their spouses that will be making the journey to Sydney. For many, this represents a trip of a lifetime, and we are committed to making it quintessentially Aussie. There will also be lots of opportunity to support our charity partner St Anthony's family care, including our International Raffle which this year proceeds will go to St Anthonys in support of their mission to nurture and support children & young adults of all abilities.

The official Congress App and website contain all up-to-date information essential for Members. Delegates are encouraged to utilise the App for schedules, updates, and key details throughout the event.

If you are arriving in Sydney on the first day of the Congress, Sunday 12 April, airport transfers are included. Be sure to provide these details in your registration before 1 March, so our Airport team can meet you. Alternatively, you may take the Airport Link train to Town Hall Station. From Town Hall Station, it is about a 10-minute walk to the Hyatt Regency at 161 Sussex Street. Uber and Taxis are readily available from both domestic and international terminals.

We have several Les Clefs d'Or exclusive deals on tourism, wine, hair and make-up, jewellery and more. Keep an eye out for an email in relation to these soon! Aside from the Congress our usual calendar of events has been extremely busy across the country. A highlight of late last year was our Gala Ball in Sydney, this was the first time it has been held since Covid and was a great hit. Raising over five thousand dollars for our charity partner St Anthony's family care.

If you have any questions about the Congress, please email us at congress@lesclefsdoraustralia.org.

Yours in friendship,

Dean McWhinney



AUSTRALIA

Come say G'Day!



FRANCE

Les Clefs d'Or Academie

The second edition of Les Clefs d'Or Académie, held on February 17, 2026, under the leadership of Dominique Guidetti, President of Les Clefs d'Or France, brought together members and partners for an afternoon dedicated to knowledge sharing, professional development, and innovation. This event is now firmly established as a key moment in the associative life of Les Clefs d'Or France, symbolizing professional unity and a shared commitment to service excellence.

Hosted in the prestigious setting of the Pathé Palace, the event showcased the value of meaningful, synergistic collaborations that strengthen the profession. Representatives of the Pathé Palace presented this iconic cultural venue, now redesigned to offer an immersive experience that blends heritage, hospitality, and state-of-the-art technology.

The Partouche Casino Group then took the floor to provide members with insights into the world of gaming clubs in Paris, their specificities, and their recent developments. In a spirit of trust and cooperation, the Group shared exclusive, confidential information regarding its upcoming opening in Paris, enhancing the concierge community's ability to guide and advise their clients with confidence and precision.

Next, Samy Seryer from Concierge Organizer offered a professional perspective on the strengths and limitations of digital tools used in designing personalized itineraries. His presentation shed light on how technology can support—without replacing—the unique human expertise that defines the work of concierges.

The afternoon concluded with an inspiring talk by the famous pastry chef Yann Couvreur, accompanied by Alexandra Zakine. Their presentation illustrated the perfect blend of artisanal craftsmanship, creativity, and high-end service, offering members new opportunities for collaboration tailored to the expectations of a demanding clientele.

Throughout these diverse presentations, the event reaffirmed the core values of Les Clefs d'Or: **mutual support, the sharing of expertise, and an unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional service.** Informal breaks, conducive to networking and discussion, further strengthened the family spirit and professional cohesion that characterize the association.

The quality of the contributions, the enthusiasm of the members, and the strength of the partnerships highlighted the renewed success of this edition. Les Clefs d'Or Académie continues to play a key role in supporting concierges as they refine their skills and embody, day after day, the values of excellence and dedication that define their profession.



GERMANY

Inspiration, Networking and Education – The Spirit is On!

This year's Young Concierge Seminar, led by our esteemed speaker Gerhard Fuchs, took place at the invitation of the board of Les Clefs d'Or Germany at the legendary Hotel Elephant Weimar.

In the historic city of Weimar — renowned as the “City of Poets and Thinkers” — young concierge talents from a wide variety of hotels across Germany came together to learn, connect and grow.

Supporting and developing our young colleagues is particularly close to our hearts. Our mission goes far beyond simply transferring knowledge. Above all, we aim to ignite enthusiasm and passion for our profession.

We are committed to motivating, inspiring and accompanying the next generation on their professional journey within Les Clefs d'Or.

Alongside the many valuable impulses and insights gained throughout the seminar, personal exchange and networking played a central role — an essential foundation for the profession of a concierge.

Our sincere thanks go to our long-standing friend Gerhard Fuchs and to the team of Hotel Elephant Weimar for creating such a distinguished and inspiring setting for our Young Concierge Seminar.

The pictures speak for themselves — In service through friendship!



HELLAS

On Tuesday, January 13, 2026, the association LES CLEFS D'OR HELLAS -THE GOLDEN KEYS OF GREECE cut the New Year's cake at the Athenaeum InterContinental Athens Hotel.

Colleagues, friends, partners, sponsors, old and new members were present and created a pleasant and friendly atmosphere. The president Mr. Dimitris Liapis, after reviewing the previous year (its participation in international conferences and meetings abroad) welcomed three new members Athena Antoniadis Head Concierge, Ioannis Giotis Pavlos Head Concierge and Drimtzas Ioannis Concierge Supervisor, from the Athens Capital, One and Only and Four Seasons Astir Palace hotels.

He then rewarded three honorary members:

Maria Sotiriadou
Consultant
Stavros Pakaizer
General Manager Athenaeum InterContinental and
Sofia Stamou
CEO "Sigma Media Group" & "Action in Greece" for their many years of contribution and assistance.

The event was honored with the presence of Mr. George Papathanasopoulos. Journalist - Representative of F.I.J.E.T. in Greece (International Federation of Tourism Journalists)
Nikos Famelos, CEO Fame Transfers
George Prasinos, General Manager, Athens Riviera Hotel
Martha Pallis, Front Office Manager-Athenaeum InterContinental
Rita Kanatoula, Head of International Publications at Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ - KATHIMERINI

Emotion filled the room when the 60th anniversary of the Union was celebrated with the cutting of the cake.

The lucky winner of the evening, Thanasis Xanalatos, won a 200 euro meal at the Dionysos Zonars restaurant and a lucky charm from the Zolotas house.

At the end of the evening, the Union held its elections for the next 3 years.

New Executive committee:

President: Dimitrios Liapis (Athenaeum InterContinental Hotel)

Vice President: Ioannis Klimatzas (Hotel Grand Bretagne, a Luxury Collection Hotel)

Secretary: Apostolos Papayiannakis (Hotel Grand Bretagne, a Luxury Collection Hotel)

Treasurer: Dimitris Liatis (Athenaeum InterContinental Hotel)

Member: Nasos Stathogiannopoulos (Four Seasons Astir Palace Hotel)

Last there was a nice interview at the newspaper "Kokinos Protathlitis" of Dimitrios Liapis.



HUNGARY

Concierge vs. AI: What does the future hold?

On Friday, February 6, 2026, Les Clefs d'Or Hungary hosted a landmark professional summit at the Hungarian Museum of Trade and Tourism. The event brought together legendary past members and current concierges of the Hungarian hotel industry to tackle the most pressing question of our era: How do we integrate Artificial Intelligence without losing the "Human Touch"?

Strategic Visions: Technology as a Tool, Not a Goal

After welcoming remarks by Dr. Róbert Török, director of the Hungarian Museum of Trade and Tourism, the day opened with a powerful message from Zoltán Somlyai, President of the Association of Hungarian Hotels and Restaurants (MSZÉSZ). He reminded attendees that while technology is essential for optimizing modern processes, the true added value of a luxury stay remains rooted in authentic human interaction.

This was balanced by a "boots-on-the-ground" perspective from Mariann Gaál (Hotel Marina Port), who shared the unvarnished reality of digitalization. Her presentation highlighted that the path to a high-tech lobby is often paved with unexpected obstacles, proving that innovation requires resilience as much as investment.

Roundtable: The Role and of AI in the Daily Work of a Concierge

A highlight for our members was the panel discussion, moderated by Endre Bártfai- University lecturer, the president of the Association of Tourism Development Experts and Consultants (TUTSZ), and professional member of Les Clefs d'Or Hungary-, the panel featured a "who's who" of the Hungarian section:

- * Péter Buday (Past President of Les Clefs d'Or Hungary, Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace)
- * Tamás Ungár (Past President of Les Clefs d'Or Hungary, Maison Bistro & Hotel Budapest)
- * Róbert Zemliczki (President of Les Clefs d'Or Hungary, Hilton Budapest)

The Consensus: While AI can significantly boost efficiency in handling data and routine inquiries, it can never replicate the luxury, intuition, and bespoke nature of a Les Clefs d'Or Concierge. We use the tools, but we provide the soul.

Innovation Spotlight

The afternoon shifted to the latest software solutions transforming the guest journey:

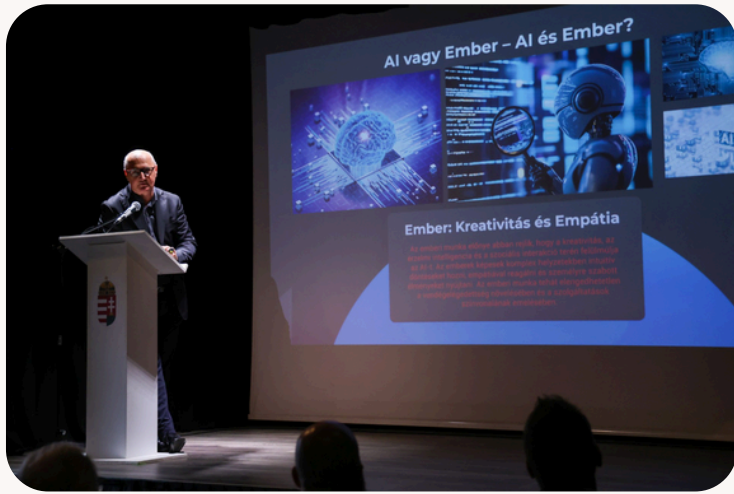
- * AI-Enhanced Communication: Gábor Dencs (Bonomi) showcased tools designed to streamline guest interactions.
- * The Digital Assistant: Árpád Csobota-Kis and Sándor Oláh introduced HotelMentor.AI, a specialized assistant tailored for the hospitality sector.
- * PMS Evolution: The day concluded with a deep dive into "PMS Without Borders," exploring how future property management systems must prioritize integration to reduce administrative burdens.

Celebrating Our Heritage

To close the event, members and guests were treated to a private guided tour of the museum's temporary exhibition: "The Hungarian Golden Key – Hotel Concierges at the Service of Guests" led by past president, Tamás Ungár. The tour walked participants through the rich history of our national and international organization. It served as a poignant reminder that while we look toward 2026 and beyond, our values of service and fraternity remain timeless.



HUNGARY



EXCITING NEWS:

THE EXHIBITION, "THE HUNGARIAN GOLDEN KEY – HOTEL CONCIERGES AT THE SERVICE OF GUESTS", WAS ORIGINALLY OPEN TO VISITORS UNTIL MARCH 15, 2026, BUT DUE TO ITS GREAT SUCCESS, IT HAS NOW BEEN EXTENDED AND WILL REMAIN OPEN UNTIL OCTOBER 25.

VIVE LES CLEFS D'OR!
IN SERVICE THROUGH FRIENDSHIP, LES CLEFS D'OR HUNGARY



IRELAND

Les Clefs d'Or Ireland – Celebrating Service, Excellence and Fellowship

Luxury Raffle and Charity Auction at Annual Gala Ball

Les Clefs d'Or Ireland has a long and proud tradition of supporting charities within our local communities. Giving back to the communities in which we live and work is a privilege we value deeply, and it has become the centrepiece of our Annual Gala Ball — a highlight of the Irish hospitality calendar.

For the past two years, our chosen charity has been LauraLynn – Ireland's Children's Hospice. The care and compassion they provide to children with life-limiting conditions and their families across Ireland is truly inspirational. At our recent Gala Ball, hosted at Anantara The Marker Dublin Hotel on 7th February, our renowned Luxury Raffle and Charity Auction raised an incredible €10,500 in support of their vital work. Generous contributions from our member hotels, Business Affiliates, sponsors and partners made this possible.



Denis TC O'Brien – Irish Concierge of the Year Award

The winner of the prestigious Les Clefs d'Or Ireland Concierge of the Year Award was announced on the evening of our Annual Gala Ball. This esteemed accolade recognises an individual who demonstrates exceptional professionalism, commitment, and knowledge, and who consistently delivers an outstanding contribution in their role as concierge. The prestigious Denis TC O'Brien – Irish Concierge of the Year Award was presented to Mr Barry White, Concierge Manager at Anantara The Marker Dublin. This award recognises Barry's years of dedication to the concierge profession and his commitment to our Society.

25 Years of Proud Membership in Les Clefs d'Or Ireland

A particularly meaningful moment of the evening was the presentation of 25th Anniversary Badges to Mr Paul Fitzsimons and Mr Robbie Smyth, celebrating 25 years of dedicated membership in Les Clefs d'Or Ireland.

Paul is a two-time recipient of the Irish Concierge of the Year Award, having received this honour in 2012 and again in 2023. His service extended beyond daily professional duties, as he proudly served as President of the Irish Section from 2014 to 2020.

Robbie has also been recognised twice as Irish Concierge of the Year, receiving the award in 2014 and 2019.

He has dedicated many years of service as a member of the Executive Committee, contributing his experience, insight and steady support to the ongoing development of our Section.

Their 25-year milestone is a testament to service, integrity and the enduring spirit of Les Clefs d'Or.



CSR Report Keys for Trees Nov 2025

On November 12, Les Clefs d'Or Japan conducted its second CSR tree-planting initiative on the Noto Peninsula, advancing the global "Keys for Trees" program and reaffirming our long-term commitment to environmental stewardship and community support. Building on last year's inaugural planting in Japan, this year's visit strengthened our ongoing partnership with Kaga Mokuzai Co., Ltd., its President Mr. Masue, their dedicated team. Relationships first established during our pre-earthquake visit in 2023.



Upon arrival at Noto Airport, President Masue provided an in-depth overview of their sustainable forestry and reforestation efforts. Guided by their expertise, our members planted 50 Noto Hiba saplings, a culturally significant cedar native to the region. The serene atmosphere and ideal weather underscored the meaningfulness of the activity and reminded us of the impact that sustained CSR engagement can have over time.



We were pleased to revisit last year's commemorative planting site and confirm the healthy growth of those trees—an encouraging sign of the continuity and effectiveness of environmental initiatives. In the afternoon, we traveled to Wajima to explore the area's craftsmanship and resilience. At Hiyoshi Brewery, which remarkably withstood the earthquake despite surrounding devastation, we heard firsthand accounts of the community's recovery efforts. We also visited Wajima Kirimoto, where we observed the precise artistry behind traditional lacquerware, deepening our respect for the region's cultural heritage.



Although reconstruction is steadily progressing, tourism in the area has yet to fully rebound. Seeing these realities firsthand was invaluable for us as concierges committed to supporting local communities.

Les Clefs d'Or Japan remains dedicated to contributing to the Noto Peninsula's recovery and will continue advancing CSR initiatives that preserve its environment, heritage, and future.

JAPAN

Mr. Mark Patterson Mini Seminar "The Relations Code"

On September 2, we welcomed Mr. Mark Patterson, who has been long active with Les Clefs d'Or, shared timeless insights on hospitality: people prefer to engage with those they know, trust, and like. Markets and technologies may change, yet this principle remains central, especially in luxury service.

He posed a scenario: two identical hotels, one less expensive and one pricier, but guests often choose the more expensive hotel, if trust and human connection are present.

Patterson also shared his background, where his career began as a Bell person at the Sheraton Copenhagen in 1979, mentored by Mr. Arshad Khokhar (Former President of Les Clefs d'Or Denmark), whose kindness shaped his path. That early lesson, "hospitality is human connection" remains his guiding truth.

He emphasized the Concierge's world of chaos and unpredictability, urging professionals to embrace it through networks, like fishing nets or webs, that create order and opportunity.

He encouraged visualizing one's network as a living map of strong ties, weak ties, and growth areas.

While strong ties build trust, weak ties often open doors to new opportunities.

Diversity and "hubs"; well-connected individuals across fields, further enrich these networks.

Mr. Patterson noted that post-pandemic networking still lags, but this highlights the value of face-to-face connection, where concierges excel.

On the topic of Artificial Intelligence, he was clear; while it is a super power for us and the technology aids efficiency, but cannot replace empathy or warmth.

What truly endures is generosity, giving time, attention, and trust.

Mr. Patterson concluded that "The Relations Code" is as old as humanity. For Concierges, embodying it through diverse networks and authentic giving ensures hospitality thrives, not by algorithms, but by people.

In my perspective, I fully agree; especially AI may enhance us, but it will never replace the human touch that defines our profession.



KOREA

Les Clefs d'Or Korea's Contribution to APEC 2025 in Gyeongju

In 2025, Les Clefs d'Or Korea supported the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings hosted in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea.

Gyeongju, widely recognized as the cultural capital of Korea and a UNESCO World Heritage city, carries deep historical significance. However, as a smaller destination compared to major metropolitan centers, it had limited experience hosting diplomatic events of this scale. This presented a unique operational challenge for the local hospitality industry.

Prior to the summit, Les Clefs d'Or Korea was invited to conduct specialized service training programs for hotel professionals in the region. These sessions focused on international protocol standards, VIP guest handling, cultural sensitivity, and operational anticipation. The goal was to strengthen service readiness and align local hospitality practices with global expectations for state-level events.

In addition to training, members of Les Clefs d'Or Korea participated in on-site inspections and operational readiness reviews alongside organizing authorities and venue operators. Transportation flow, arrival sequencing, concierge coordination, and guest movement planning were carefully evaluated to ensure seamless execution during the summit.

During APEC 2025, Les Clefs d'Or Korea members provided direct concierge and protocol support to distinguished delegates, delivering discreet coordination and professional guest relations throughout the event period.

John Cho, President of Les Clefs d'Or Korea, also attended a government-level briefing session associated with the National Cabinet Meeting, where operational readiness and hospitality coordination were formally reported. This participation reflected the confidence placed in professional concierge expertise within the broader national support framework.

Following the successful conclusion of APEC 2025, John Cho received a Presidential Commendation (Mokryeon Medal) in recognition of his leadership and contribution. This honor represents not only an individual distinction, but the collective dedication and professionalism of Les Clefs d'Or Korea members who supported this significant national initiative.

This milestone demonstrates how concierge professionals can contribute beyond hotel operations—serving as trusted partners in diplomacy, cultural exchange, and international cooperation, while upholding the values and global standards of Les Clefs d'Or worldwide.



KOREA



PORTUGAL

A day in Sintra!

On the 5th of November 2025, we had the pleasure of organizing and participating in a truly memorable full-day experience with Chaves de Ouro Portugal in Sintra. With 19 distinguished participants, the day was thoughtfully curated to celebrate culture, gastronomy, and exceptional hospitality.

Our journey began in the enchanting town of Sintra with a guided visit to the magnificent Palácio Nacional de Sintra. This iconic palace, with its unmistakable twin chimneys and richly decorated interiors, offered a deep dive into Portugal's royal history. Walking through its ornate rooms and admiring the intricate tilework provided a fascinating insight into centuries of heritage.

We then continued to the elegant Palácio Biester, a hidden gem nestled in the Sintra hills. Its romantic architecture, lush gardens, and breathtaking views created a magical atmosphere. The visit allowed participants to explore one of Sintra's lesser-known yet remarkable landmarks, enriching the cultural dimension of the day.

For lunch, we headed to the stunning Panorama Guincho, where gastronomy met spectacular scenery. Overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, the restaurant provided the perfect setting to relax, network, and enjoy refined Portuguese cuisine. The combination of exquisite flavors and panoramic coastal views made this moment particularly special for the group.

To conclude this remarkable day, we visited Quinta de São Michel for a guided wine tour and tasting. Surrounded by beautiful vineyards, participants learned about the winemaking process and sampled a selection of carefully crafted wines. It was the perfect ending — relaxed, convivial, and authentically Portuguese.

This full-day experience combined history, culture, gastronomy, and wine in a seamless and inspiring way. It was a privilege to share such meaningful moments with the members of Chaves de Ouro Portugal, strengthening connections and celebrating the excellence that defines their profession.



RUSSIA

Les Clefs d'Or Russia: growth of the section and partnership development

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Greetings from Russian section!



On January 25, our section celebrated its 26th Anniversary.

This year, we chose the city of Kazan in Tatarstan for our meeting, and members from across the country gathered to celebrate this special occasion.

Prior to the reception, our members enjoyed a walking tour of the downtown area. The official part began with greetings from the Executive Committee, a review of the year 2025 (during the last year Russian section welcomed nine new members, and two former members reinstated their membership), and a discussion of our plans for 2026.

The gala dinner took place at the Luciano Hotel. Among the highlights of the celebration was summing up the results of charity lottery. Holding a lottery is a long-standing tradition that we have maintained for many years. We raised 716,000 rubles (about 7,800 euros) and donated this amount to an orphanage in Kazan. These incredible results were achieved thanks to the strong support of leading hotels from Moscow to Vladivostok and local partners, as well as the implementation of new technologies in the process.

Earlier, on November 25 and 26, with the support of the State Hermitage Museum, one of Russia's principal museums, a seminar was organized for LCD members and heads of tour and tourism departments from major St. Petersburg museums. The main purpose of the seminar was to strengthen partnerships between hotels and museums.

On November 25, participants gathered at the Lotte Hotel, where Les Clefs d'Or members explained to museum representatives the history of the concierge profession, the origin and importance of the global Les Clefs d'Or Society and its values, as well as the high service standards of the hotel industry. This allowed museum specialists to see the work of a concierge from the inside. The business program continued on November 26 at the Lecture Hall of the State Hermitage Museum. The seminar began with a welcome speech from Olga Arkhipova, Head of the Department of Tourism and Special Programs. The key moment of the day was an open discussion involving museum representatives and the Concierge Society. During this lively exchange, seminar participants received answers to the most pressing question: how to build effective, long-term cooperation. The event concluded with a cultural program for the seminar participants — a guided tour of the General Staff Building.



THAILAND

The Les Clefs d'Or Thailand Annual General Meeting 2025 commenced with a meaningful and inspiring gathering at Courtyard by Marriott Phuket Town.

Day One focused on Community-Based Tourism, highlighting the vital role concierges play in connecting travelers with authentic local experiences while supporting and uplifting the communities we serve. The session served as a powerful reminder that our profession extends beyond service — it carries the responsibility to create positive and lasting impact.

Day Two provided an opportunity to reflect on the past year's achievements, celebrate our collective successes, and strengthen the bonds that unite us as a professional family. Throughout the year, our members have demonstrated exceptional dedication, continually elevating service standards and proudly representing the Golden Keys across Thailand.

Education & Professional Development 2025

A highlight of this year's program was the Education Day on "The Foundation of Rattanakosin: People – Environment – Cultural Landscape," led by Dr. Rasita Sin-ek-iem. The session, complemented by onsite explorations and storytelling workshops, reinforced the importance of connecting knowledge with authentic guest experiences.

Inspiring the next generation of Hospitality Leaders -Training Programs

Throughout 2025–2026, Les Clefs d'Or Thailand has actively strengthened its commitment to education through a series of training programs and academic collaborations across leading universities nationwide.

Led by our President and Vice President, together with dedicated members of our professional team, these sessions were conducted at institutions including AIHM, Prince of Songkhla University (Surat Thani and Phuket Campuses), Mae Fah Luang University, Srinakharinwirot University, Stamford International University.

CSR Highlights

During our Annual General Meeting, our CSR Committee proudly organized a donation to Vachira Phuket Hospital, supporting its fundraising efforts for the new Radiation Oncology Center and helping improve access to advanced cancer treatment for the local community.

Environmental responsibility was also at the heart of our mission through the "Keys for Trees" initiative, where members united to plant trees and contribute to a greener future.

We actively participated in the Wings for Life World Run, supporting global spinal cord research, and organized a Blood Donation Campaign with the Thai Red Cross, reinforcing our dedication to saving lives. Our outreach continued with CCD Thailand, where members shared "A Lunch of Love" with children with disabilities—bringing care, compassion, and hope.



THAILAND



THE LES CLEFS D'OR VALUES
23 September 2025
Stamford International University

Mr. Sukanya Tansathong (Tina) Vice President, Les Clefs d'Or Thailand
Mr. Korkiat Unatom (Tony) Education Committee, Les Clefs d'Or Thailand
Mr. Anurakorn Anuchangwong (Dunk) President, Les Clefs d'Or Thailand



"INTO THE CONCIERGE WORLD"
MAE FAH LUANG UNIVERSITY
02 September 2025
09:00 - 12:00

SRINAKARINWIROT UNIVERSITY
18 NOVEMBER 2025

Mr. Tanakrit Pongwitt (Nuam) Carlton Hotel Bangkok Sukhumvit
Mr. Korkiat Unatom (Tony) The St. Regis Bangkok

Les Clefs d'Or Thailand

BLOOD DONATION

"A single pint of blood can save three lives. Imagine the difference you can make today, be someone's hero, give the gift of life."

5 September 2025
National Blood Center, Thai Red Cross Society
13:00 hrs.

+6685-502-5832
Pencha W. Social Responsibility Committees



USA

In January 2026, the **Board of Directors held an in-person meeting in New York City.**

Unlike usual meetings, this two-day workshop focused on brainstorming new social media campaigns, website development, and compliance strategies for Les Clefs d'Or USA and its members.

As part of our activities, we toured the newly reopened Waldorf Astoria, guided by our 2025 Young Leader, Mr. Daniel Dumo. After being closed for nearly a decade for renovations and redesign, the Waldorf Astoria now boasts stunning results.



A meeting highlight was the resolution to our challenge of keeping our members in compliance with the UICH Book of Members. The resolution has already been implemented; our members are now required to include a screenshot of signing into the Book of Members in their annual membership recertification. We thank our members for their understanding and participation in this very important requirement.

Our board looks forward to the next steps in utilizing and implementing the results of our time together in service of our members and our section.

After the retirement announcement of our bookkeeper, Ms. Muffin Spielman, we spent the last months in search of her replacement. We send our heartfelt thanks to Muffin for her years of dedication and service, not only to the USA, but the UICH as well. **Thank you, Muffin!**

The weekend featured a reception at **Brasserie Boulud, hosted by Chef Daniel Bouloud** for the board and local Clefs d'Or members. Connecting with local members is always the highlight of our meeting weekend.





With gratitude for your
continued support and
engagement.

Please continue to share your stories with us.
Your experiences and achievements are what keep
our global community alive and inspiring.
For future submissions, we invite you to send
your contributions to
communication@lesclefsdor.org

