

MODERN LUXURY

Silicon Valley

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HOT PROPERTIES

A local operator of upscale hotels expands while still delivering distinctive guest experiences.

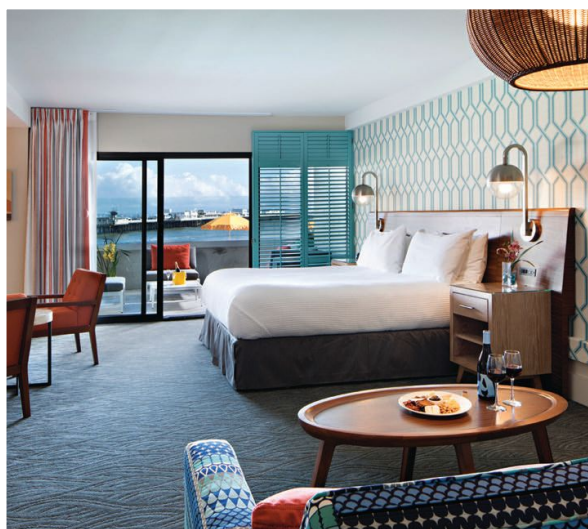
By Anh-Minh Le

Seated in the courtyard of the Stanford Park Hotel in Menlo Park—one of his family’s charming properties—Greg Alden warmly recalls his parents’ early days as hoteliers. “If we needed a new bed in a guest room, we’d drive up with a mattress on the roof of the car,” says Alden, the CEO and president of Woodside Hotels (woodsidehotels.com), which his parents founded in 1972 after purchasing the Bodega Bay Lodge. While the company’s portfolio has grown to include nine establishments that it owns and/or manages, one thing has remained a constant: “We’re focused on distinct destinations that embody what makes Northern California so great,” Alden continues. “We want to understand these local communities—the culture, the people, the environment and really be the hotel of that destination.”

The Menlo Park-based hotel group recently assumed management of Santa Cruz’s Dream Inn and Calistoga’s Indian Springs. The former unveiled a multimillion-dollar renovation in late April that entailed upgrades to its 165 guest rooms and suites—all of which boast views of the water—along with the lobby and pool area. Indian Springs, says Alden, “has this tremendously authentic, earthy feeling. There are a lot of wonderful resorts up there, but few capture the sense of place like this one does. It has the mineral baths and natural spring waters that make it inherently unique.”

Rounding out the Woodside Hotels properties are Bernardus Lodge & Spa in Carmel Valley, Hotel Drisco in San Francisco, the East Bay’s Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa, Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa and Napa Valley Lodge in Yountville. “I can get from my office to the front door of any of our hotels in 2 ½ hours,” says Alden. “Being there, getting to know the team, is really important.” As is keeping the lodgings fresh: Hotel Drisco is expected to reopen this summer after a revamp, and the Stanford Park Hotel is embarking on a \$13 million makeover this fall.

For Alden—a Dartmouth College art history major who later studied architecture in Florence, Italy; earned an MBA from UCLA; and worked in real estate private equity—his role at Woodside Hotels aligns well with his personal and professional interests. (Neither of his siblings is involved in the family business.) “I’ve always been very passionate about physical spaces, buildings and built environments,” he says. “And I think as a middle child too, [I was] always a people-pleaser; always had that gene of wanting to provide for others. ... At the end of the day, it comes down to how people feel when they walk in that door.”



From top: Relaxation and well-being are central at Indian Springs resort in Calistoga; the newly renovated Dream Inn, located along Cowell’s Beach in Santa Cruz.

INDIAN SPRINGS PHOTO COURTESY OF INDIAN SPRINGS; DREAM INN PHOTO COURTESY OF PAUL DYER