

# LODGING

## Best Western Reviews Year of Success at Convention

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PHOENIX—Best Western Hotels & Resorts celebrated its annual convention this week and recapped a number of accomplishments from its 70th birthday year. Joined by approximately 2,600 members of the Best Western family, Best Western Hotels & Resorts' President and CEO David Kong led the celebration and discussed each company advancement.

"As we celebrate our 70th anniversary, we are sending a message to the world that our brand is on the move and continuing to evolve to focus on the needs of Today's Travelers," said Kong. "We are challenging ourselves to soar to new heights, reach new destinations and achieve things that were once considered to be impossible."

Announced at last year's convention, Best Western is already 50 percent complete in its reimagined brand identity to help clarify its exceptional offerings and broaden the appeal with a contemporary, energetic and relevant look. The company has also focused on evaluating the evolving needs of Today's Traveler zeroing in on technology integration, social engagement and consistent service.

Best Western has aggressively transformed itself to be an exciting and relevant brand. Just in the last five years, Best Western implemented the descriptor program, evolved from one brand to seven, introduced innovative sales and marketing programs, launched a whole new digital platform, redesigned its powerful loyalty program and underwent renovations at every hotel. Finally, the brand is winning more awards than any other brand and has achieved record RevPAR.

In addition, the company launched four new brands in the past two years to broaden its customer base—Vīb, GLō, Executive Residency by Best Western, and BW Premier Collection. Vīb and GLō are boutique products aimed at the midscale to upscale segments. Executive Residency provides the extended stay product that is highly popular in the midscale and upscale segments. Finally, BW Premier Collection allows the company to tap into the upper scale segment. Best Western currently has 12 BW Premier Collection properties with 10 in the pipeline and 26 Executive Residency properties in the pipeline. The company broke ground on the first Vīb in Chicago, followed by Springfield, Illinois

and Staten Island, New York. Two additional Vīb hotels will open in Miami, Florida in 2017. There are currently eight Vīb hotels planned in North America and ten additional projects in international locations. The first Vīb will open in Turkey in about 30 days.

To further market the brand and connect with today's traveler, Best Western Hotels & Resorts this year partnered with Google and is providing guests with an immersive 360 degree look into their hotel brands and offerings with the Best Western Virtual Reality Experience (BWVRE)—allowing travelers to view guest rooms, hotel lobbies and amenities prior to arrival on-property. On that note, as part of its I Care, Every Guest Every Time initiative, Best Western Hotels & Resorts has partnered with Mursion—a virtual training platform where professionals practice and master complex interpersonal skills—to design and deliver simulations for hotel employees that mimic real-life customer interactions. The introduction made Best Western Hotels & Resorts the first hotel company to leverage VR to transform communications between hotel staff and guests.

Furthering its technological advancements, Best Western Hotels & Resorts recently launched the new BestWestern.com powered by its new digital platform as its latest endeavor to optimize and streamline the customer experience across all digital channels. The innovative design focuses on highly visual, interactive components and adapts to the screen size of the device a customer is using – whether that be a smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop PC—providing an intuitive, image-rich, consumer-driven experience for the brand's site.

Most recently, Best Western announced its first “white-label” franchise concept—SureStay Hotel Group. SureStay will operate as a separate subsidiary while plugging hotel owners into the company's infrastructure and distribution channels. With three distinctive brands—SureStay Hotel (Premium Economy), SureStay Plus Hotel (Lower Midscale) and SureStay Signature Collection (Midscale Soft Brand)—Best Western aims to provide options in the marketplace for franchisees who are disillusioned by one-sided contracts that do not deliver. During the annual convention, Kong spoke about how SureStay will allow Best Western to tap into economy and midscale segments without compromising brand image.

“With SureStay, we are committed to seeking select hotels that will focus on delivering outstanding service that will resonate with consumers in these hotel segments. Each hotel will need to achieve and maintain a TripAdvisor score of 3.5 or higher and will have to adhere to the SureStay Service Promise. Creating consumer relevance and confidence will be key to its success.”