

BLLA Declares Hospitality Has Entered the Age of Wonder

The 17th Annual Boutique Hotel Owners Conference Returns to LA this Fall

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The [Boutique & Luxury Lodging Association \(BLLA\)](#) has entered a new era of storytelling for the boutique hotel industry, declaring 2026 the Age of Wonder. The theme anchors this year's Boutique Hotel Owners Conference (BHOC), the 17th edition of the flagship gathering, taking place October 19–20 at the Westlake Village Inn in Southern California.



BLLA Owners Conference — October 19-20, 2026

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Frances Kiradjian, Founder & CEO of BLLA

Wonder is a word rarely used in hospitality strategy, and that is precisely the point. BLLA's premise is simple: curious minds build the most memorable hotels. Boutique hotel owners are the ones who stop. Who let themselves feel awe in a hidden café down an alley, in a conversation that runs longer than planned, in the quiet architecture of a room that gets the light right. That capacity for wonder does not end with them. It gets translated, room by room and detail by detail, into the hotels they build. BHOC 2026 is built around that translation, and how it becomes hospitality's greatest business advantage.

"The most remarkable boutique hotels have never been built by following a blueprint," said Frances Kiradjian, Founder & CEO of BLLA. "They're created by people who remain endlessly curious about the world and translate that curiosity into experiences that guests never forget. The Age of Wonder is an invitation to rediscover that mindset and explore how wonder itself becomes one of hospitality's greatest competitive advantages."

"Wonder is more than inspiration. It's a strategic advantage," added Ariela Kiradjian, Partner & COO of BLLA, who will open the conference. "The hotels that leave lasting impressions are built by leaders who continue exploring, observing, questioning, and evolving. This conference is designed to create the space for those conversations and discoveries to happen."

A Two-Day Gathering, Built for Independent Owners

Since 2012, BHOC has been the original conference built exclusively for independent boutique hotel ownership and leadership. Unlike conferences where speakers disappear once their session ends, BHOC executives stay present throughout the two days, so conversations that start on stage continue at lunch, at the bar, and in the hallway.

The 2026 agenda moves from the ideas behind a hotel to the mechanics of building one, with sessions including:

- What It Costs to Build a Feeling
- Running the Room: Luxury General Managers Talk
- The Retail Opportunity Hotels Keep Missing
- The Restaurant That Makes the Hotel
- Machines, Meeting Magic
- Who Takes the Keys: Succession Planning
- The Lost Art of Innkeeping
- The Budget Is a Love Language
- The Story Is the Strategy
- The Nightstand Test: Show and Tell
- Fresh Openings: New Boutique Hotels
- What the CEO Sees

Speakers confirmed for 2026 include Ed Scheetz (PUBLIC Hotel West Hollywood), Daniel André Langer (Équité), Oliver English (Common Table Creative), Tony Greenberg (SingleThread Farm),



Boutique hotel owners and executives gather for connection, conversation, and discovery.



Meaningful dialogue takes center stage as attendees engage with speakers and one another.

Gregory Day (Malibu Beach Inn), Jayson Seidman (Sandstone), Kama Carter (Southall Farm & Inn), Hya Valdez, (Capital One Travel), and Mike and Matt French (Life & Times Hospitality). See the full list on the website.

This year's program was shaped by BHOC's Program Planning Committee: Kimberly Walker (Founder & Creative Director, Nomada Hotel Group), Maya Mallick (Owner & Creative Director, The Culver Hotel), Jon Sakshaug (CEO, Hotel Emma), Gary Pearl (Senior Vice President, AETHOS Consulting Group), David Bowd (Co-Founder & CEO, Salt Hotels), Christie Toal (Owner, The Compass McMinnville), and Todd Towers (Founder & CEO, Farmboy Fine Arts).

Beyond the main stage, BHOC 2026 offers networking built with the same intention as its programming: lakeside lunches with guided conversation prompts, founder manifestos, evening receptions, "Connect with Strangers" sessions, and discussions designed to spark real dialogue rather than small talk.

Sponsorship

BHOC 2026 is made possible by partners who share BLLA's commitment to the boutique hospitality industry.

Top Sponsors: Greenberg Traurig, Pacific Advisors, Nestlé Waters & Premium Beverages, Arch RoamRight, The Company Store, Coast to Coast, Cvent, Nespresso, Capital One Travel, ThinkReservations, Petra Risk Solutions, and SiteMinder.

Supporting Sponsors: Sencie, Jonas Chorum, Groove Technology Solutions, CDH, AmWins-ResortGuard, and PriceLabs.

Sponsorship opportunities remain open for organizations looking to connect with boutique hotel owners and decision-makers through highly curated experiences and meaningful industry engagement.

Three Days at Westlake Village Inn

Immediately after BHOC, attendees can extend their stay by joining the Women in Travel & Hospitality Conference on October 21, bringing together three consecutive days of programming, connection, and community at the Westlake Village Inn.

Since its founding in 2009, BLLA has championed the independent boutique and luxury hotel movement worldwide, uniting the industry's brightest minds through research, advocacy, education, and world-class events. Over 17 years, thousands of executives have walked through BHOC's doors and left with a transformative experience, carrying what they discovered back into the hotels they lead. [Registration is now open](#). For tickets and sponsorship opportunities, visit BLLA.org/events. [Visit the Agenda here](#).

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