



## PHILANTHROPY

**Charity: Water** is on a mission to provide clean drinking water to the world — and change the face of charity too.

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## CELEBRITY

Multifaceted actor **Colin Firth** steps up to take on the role of superspy. Goodbye, Darcy. Hello, Harry Hart.

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## GIFT GUIDE

'Tis the time to shop: **44 luxurious gift ideas** for anyone and everyone on your list this season

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WINTER 2014

# ESCAPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

**FOUR** amazing trips  
to book now —  
from the snowy peaks  
of the **SWISS ALPS**  
to the sunny shores  
of **MUSTIQUE**

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// KLOSTERS, SWITZERLAND

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COLLECTIBLE  
COVERS



# SOCIAL NETWORKING

In today's globalized world of business, **EXCLUSIVE MEMBERS-ONLY CLUBS** are rapidly taking over as the way to make new business connections. Think of it as Networking 2.0.

**A**T ONE TIME, before LinkedIn and The Ladders — indeed, before the Internet took networking digital — meeting a well-curated crowd of potential new business associates and colleagues most often meant attending conferences or symposiums. But this was hardly the only way: More impromptu interactions among executives would commonly occur over rounds of golf on the links at the local country club or over rounds of martinis at the bar afterward. These spur-of-the-moment meetings could be just as productive as their more prearranged corollaries, and

maybe even more so, as the relaxed atmosphere led to open dialogue and out-of-the-box thinking.

Today, the hometown country club still serves something of the same purpose, but in our increasingly globalized world, where your next trip is as likely to take you to Shanghai as it is to Dallas, a new set of members-only clubs are rapidly taking over as a way to help people make similarly serendipitous — and often surprising — connections.

They're top-end destination clubs, and high-flying folks around the country, if not the world, are finding

**CLUB BENEFITS:** In addition to having access to a portfolio of 100 residences around the world, Quintess' 600 members can also participate in the club's adventure program, which offers expertly curated experiential trips to exotic destinations such as Myanmar, home to the 2,500-year-old Shwedagon Pagoda.



**BUSINESS WITH A VIEW:** Inspirato has five residences at the Montage Kapalua Bay resort in Maui, Hawaii (inset). Exclusive Resorts' Real Del Mar luxury villa is a mere 30 minutes from Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

that they offer the perfect means for mixing business and pleasure.

"[Our] club wasn't started with the intent of its being an environment that fostered or promoted interaction among members on any level, personally or professionally," says Adam Wegner of Exclusive Resorts, which gives its elite members — for the most part C-level executives, entrepreneurs and business owners who pay a minimum initiation fee of \$40,000 — access to the 300-plus multimillion-dollar staffed and

concierge-assisted homes it owns around the globe. "It was for members to create vacations and experiences for their friends and families." But over the 10 years since Exclusive Resorts was founded, Wegner, who serves as the company's executive vice president for strategy and corporate development, and his colleagues noticed that "people like having that interaction, at our locations, at our events. They're generally all only one or two degrees separated from each other, and they all have friends and interests in common." And that, in turn,

leads to connections being made and deals getting done.

"Our members have a built-in trust with each other before they even go on a trip. They feel like they have been vetted — with similar situations of wealth, status, family," explains Exclusive Resorts' director of journeys Gina Bach. "Their relationships develop so much faster because they already have this common ground." Bach reports seeing near-constant conversations between members about making introductions to other colleagues. "People are really

## THE DETAILS

### THE EDEN CLUB

[www.theedenclub.com](http://www.theedenclub.com)

**THIS GOLF-FOCUSED** outfit, established in 1997, provides threefold benefits: access to the spa, restaurants, suites/residences and surrounding links of [Pittormie Castle](#) — the club's headquarters at world-famous [St. Andrews](#) in Scotland; expert trip-planning services to otherwise members-only courses around the world; and invitations to the series of international multiday golf events the club organizes annually.

**Initiation fee:** Available upon request

**Nightly rates:** Available upon request

**Nonmember access:** The Eden Club keeps access to its properties and benefits strictly [members-only](#).

### EXCLUSIVE RESORTS

[www.exclusiveresorts.com](http://www.exclusiveresorts.com)

**BOASTING AOL FOUNDER** Steve Case as its chairman, this 10-year-old club has 4,200 or so members, all of whom have access to a network of 300-plus two- to five-bedroom [homes](#) around the world that are privately managed and club-owned, as well as privileged access to events like [Milan Fashion Week](#) and the [Aspen Ideas Festival](#), and the opportunity to partake in club trips and adventures such as [African safaris](#).

**Initiation fee:** Starting at \$40,000

**Nightly rates:** A fixed \$1,150

**Nonmember access:** The recently launched [Gateway Card](#) allows those looking to experience the membership to purchase 21 nights to be used over a three-year period at a nightly rate of \$1,550, with no initiation fee.

### INSPIRATO

[www.inspirato.com](http://www.inspirato.com)

**FOUNDED THREE YEARS AGO**, the club gives its members, who now number 8,000, entrée to a network of more than 240 [homes](#) that it leases, as well as privileged access to otherwise private alumni, country and business clubs. Like Exclusive Resorts, it also organizes trips to such places as [Bhutan](#) and [Antarctica](#) and grants access to highly coveted events, including the [Super Bowl](#).

**Initiation fee:** From \$9,500

**Nightly rates:** Variable rates from \$295

**Nonmember access:** Inspirato keeps access to its properties and benefits strictly [members-only](#).

### QUINTESS COLLECTION

[www.quintess.com](http://www.quintess.com)

**SINCE 2004**, Quintess has provided members with a portfolio of [homes](#) (today more than 100) that range in size from two to four bedrooms. Through its Beyond program, Quintess' 600-plus members enjoy entrée to private golf clubs and top resorts; and Quintess Adventures brings them in small groups on expertly curated, highly experiential itineraries, including upcoming trips to [French Polynesia](#) and [Tanzania](#).

**Initiation fee:** From \$75,000

**Nightly rates:** A constant \$1,595

**Nonmember access:** Earlier this year, Quintess debuted its [Club Card](#), which allows nonmembers to buy, for a flat fee of \$100,000, 50 nights to be used over the course of one to three years.



**SETTING THE STANDARD:** Exclusive Resorts' members have access to the decadent suites at Trump International Hotel & Tower, Chicago, as well as access to a number of the hotel's private amenities.

open about sharing their networks with other members."

Exclusive Resorts' journeys and events — specialized insider itineraries and trips organized around particular high-profile events, like the Kentucky Derby — have proved particularly fruitful networking grounds. "During a recent trip to Africa with Exclusive Resorts," one club traveler says, "I met a [fellow] member who shared my affinity for travel startups; as a result, we became investment partners in two new ventures launching this year." A club trip to Austin, Texas, meanwhile, for the inaugural Formula 1 race there, sparked two deals between members who previously hadn't known one another. And several other club travelers recently invested in a forthcoming eatery from a Washington, D.C., restaurateur and fellow member they met while traveling with the club. Talk about member benefits.

It's not just Exclusive Resorts that has experienced this phenomenon either. Similar companies — from Inspirato, a private vacation club affiliated with American Express; to Quintess, which offers a

collection of international vacation villas; to The Eden Club, a luxurious private club and gated community at St. Andrews in Scotland that also facilitates access to top golf courses around the world — all report similar findings.

"I know several members who have built lasting business relationships," says David Kallery, Inspirato's president, who goes on to say these serendipitous member-networking encounters happen everywhere the club has homes, but especially in places where there are more public spaces, like their resort destinations in Vail, Colorado; Maui, Hawaii; or Punta de Mita, Mexico. "You see two members sitting by the pool" — wearing, Kallery notes, the Inspirato hats they received upon arrival — "and the next thing you know they're exchanging numbers," he says. In locations like these, the company frequently hosts weekly welcome receptions, too, and they find that members will often ask for help organizing a house party at their own homes for other members.

Kallery draws an important distinction between the club experience and that of

a hotel: "You'd never ask them to come to your hotel room, but asking them to come to your six-bedroom villa 200 feet away makes sense. The homes themselves encourage interaction. It really just expands the definition of vacation."

Inspirato has even gone a step further. After noticing, like many of the clubs, that more and more members were using the club homes to host company meetings and retreats, as well as cross-industry events — it has a huge following among Young Presidents' Organizations, for example — Inspirato launched an Executive Membership that allows several top-level colleagues in a company to share its privileges, using the club's facilities not only for friends and family and firm off-sites but also to send partners, clients and top employees on trips too.

Exclusive Resorts' senior vice president of marketing, Kristen Nolte, also has seen an increasing number of members using the company's homes for corporate meetings and retreats, which, she says, makes just as much sense as the more impromptu networking opportunities that happen there. "For people who are really on it, really driven, really ambitious, they're often best on vacation. Your brain has to detach from the operational part of your business, and vacation lets you be more creative and idea-driven." She's working to develop a new app to let members network and stay in communication as easily online as they do off, hoping Exclusive Resorts can become even more of a catalyst, and she's launched partnerships giving members access to conferences and events organized by Women of Influence, the Aspen Institute and the Keiretsu Forum, a network of angel investors.

This potent mix of business and pleasure proves particularly attractive for the sorts of people these clubs draw in. "For our members, work is fun; it's creative and exciting, and it offers new ways to engage," Nolte notes. "It's a passion point, and it helps our members get to know each other — see who each other are — combining the personal and professional at the same time. It's the fun part of your job you get to take on vacation." 🍷

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