The AA Centenary Awards on Tuesday 2 September, held at Grosvenor House Hotel in London, were a huge success. With an audience of just under 1000, the evening event was the biggest and best yet and celebrated in true style both the winners’ achievements and AA Hotel Services’ centenary. Turn to pages 4-7 for photos of the evening and a full review. During the evening we also introduced newly awarded Red Star and multi-Rosette establishments – turn to page 8 to discover who.

The newly opened Sofitel London Heathrow, one of the largest luxury hotel and airport convention venues in the UK, is the subject of this issue’s Spotlight On feature – turn to pages 10 and 11 for further details. With the credit crunch hitting the hospitality industry hard, we’ve asked five key industry figures to give their advice on how to keep your head above the water – turn to page 13’s Discussion Point to see what they suggest. On page 14, we introduce the new range of downloadable lifestyle guides available from Garmin; and on page 15 we invite you to submit your nominations for the AA Housekeeper of the Year 2009. Plus we have some new and exciting offers from our partners SK Chase, eviivo, and beacon.

As ever, we’re delighted to receive your letters and questions. INtouch is your forum for communicating with the AA Hotel Services community so send us a letter or drop us an email at INtouch@theAA.com.

Best wishes

The Marketing Team
Changing hands?

If your establishment is changing hands, it is important that you notify Hotel Services Customer Support immediately in writing as we shall need to implement a change of hands process.

Please include details of new proprietors and any other relevant information.

Rosette plates and Red Star certificates

By now all establishments will have received where applicable their Red Star certificates and Rosette plates for 2008-2009.

Please direct any queries regarding your Rosette plate or certificate to HotelServicesCustomerSupport@theAA.com, or call 01256 844455. If you wish to receive a Red Star logo, please contact Jenny Armstrong on 01256 494974 or email jennifer.armstrong@theAA.com.

AA Rosette Academy Congrats

Congratulations to John Badley, Head Chef at Macdonald Leeming House in Watermillock, who was recently named the AA Rosette Academy Champion for 2008.

The other finalists were:

Stephen J Brannigan, Thistle Hotels
David Thomas, Grovesfield House Hotel
Wayne Thompson, New Hall Hotel
Roger Gadsden, Nutfield Priory Hotel
Darren Curson, Wood Hall Hotel and Spa
Douglas Roberts, The Witchery by the Castle

Two further AA Rosette Academy workshops open to consortia members are taking place in November: Classic British Hotels at The Sketchley Grange Hotel, Hinckley on 19 November and Best Western Hotels at The Best Western Castle Green Hotel, Kendal on 24 November. For further details and to book, please contact Martin Jeffery on 01256 493442 or by emailing martin.jeffery@theaa.com.

Books published this Autumn

The winter nights may be drawing in but in many ways, Britain is at its finest during autumn, with its golden colours and abundance of seasonal produce. Why not take a look for yourself with AA Publishing’s new title National Parks of Britain? The book, priced at £20.00 and published on 30 September, offers a unique insight into the history of each park and what can be found there – the perfect coffee table accessory for establishments that are within reach of a National Park. To order your copy today, contact Margaret Day on 01256 491524.


Just to say...

The latest news and offers from the AA

Food & Travel subscription offer

Love food, wine and travel? Then this is the magazine for you. Every issue of award-winning Food and Travel magazine brings you the best food, recipes and travel destinations from around the world. Each issue we lift the lid off saucepans, stick our noses into wine glasses, and check into some of the most interesting, fascinating and beautiful countries in the world. Packed with delicious recipes and wines to match, seasonal food features, and inspiring travel itineraries, Food and Travel magazine is essential and inspiring reading.

Subscribe now and as an AA member you can save over 30% when you take out a 6 issue subscription for just £15.90 (normally £22.80).

Log onto subscription.co.uk/foodandtravel/1043 or call 01858 438785, quoting ref. 1043.
The AA Centenary Awards 2008

The Award Winners...

Attended by the cream of the hospitality world, the AA Centenary Awards 2008, held at Grosvenor House, London, was a truly spectacular event...

Hosted by celebrity chef James Martin, the AA Centenary Awards celebrated not only the achievements of our award winners, but also one hundred years of AA Hotel Services. Our contribution to the hospitality industry over the decades was made evident throughout the evening, with a walk-through timeline at the entrance highlighting important dates in AA Hotel Services’ history; and a specially commissioned video played before the dinner, which featured testimonials from Heston Blumenthal, five Rosette owner/chef of The Fat Duck in Bray; Harry Murray MBE, managing director of Lucknam Park in Bath; and Bob Cotton, chief executive of the British Hospitality Association. In celebration of this very special event, five of our leading five Rosette chefs – Marcus Wareing, Chris Staines, David Nicholls, Raymond Blanc and Tom Aikens – created the gourmet menu. Each chef boasts a celebrated history and the meal was truly superb.

The awards event recognised and rewarded the excellent services provided by our very best establishments, and also acted as the initial high-profile launch of our new-look and improved lifestyle guides. Every AA-recognised establishment is automatically eligible to win one of these coveted titles. Winners are selected in recognition of their excellence and success within their chosen market, but they must also have shown a significant improvement in their services and facilities in the preceding 12-18 months. The achievements of these establishments throughout the year put them at the pinnacle of the hospitality industry.

Thank you to all our sponsors, who helped make the event the huge success it was.
The **AA Hotel Group of the Year Award**, sponsored by brakes, went to QHotels, a brand leader in the UK four star market which operates 21 establishments in England and Scotland and which has demonstrated flair and creativity throughout its five years of operation. No less deserving were Hotel du Vin & Bistro Ltd, who have maintained consistent levels of service, hospitality and core values throughout the group and were therefore named the **AA Small Hotel Group of the Year**.

The **AA Pub of the Year Award for England** was awarded to The Queens Arms in Corton Denham, a quintessentially English establishment which offers a warm welcome, fresh, hearty fare and a selection of wines, beers and spirits from around the world. Further north, Jesmond Dene House in Newcastle-upon-Tyne was awarded the **AA Hotel of the Year Award for England**, after impressing judges with its commendable focus on personal development of staff and its full review of standards. In the south, the Royal Oak at Paley Street in Maidenhead was named **AA Restaurant of the Year for England** for its warm, hospitable reception, its modern and exciting menu and its varied wine list; while the **AA and Best Practice Forum Business Excellence Award**, now in its second year and sponsored by hit training, went to Gatton Manor Hotel and Golf Club in Ockley for investing five years in creating a dedicated team of staff by learning from previous experiences and guest feedback.

London too received its fair share of awards, with Ransome’s Dock in Battersea receiving the **AA Wine Award for England**, sponsored by T&W Wines, impressing the judges with a wine list that was “full of passion and interest”. The **AA Restaurant of the Year Award for London** was awarded to Scott’s Restaurant in Mayfair, renowned for its seafood dishes; while Sketch (Lecture Room and Library) took the new **AA Five Rosette** award for its exemplary cuisine.
Award Winners

Scotland

AA Pub of the Year for Scotland
The Torridon Inn, Torridon

AA Wine Award for Scotland
Strathearn Restaurant at Gleneagles, Auchterarder

AA Restaurant of the Year for Scotland
The Kitchin, Edinburgh

AA Hotel of the Year for Scotland
Norton House Hotel, Edinburgh

Wales

AA Pub of the Year for Wales
The Bush Inn, St Hilary

AA Wine Award for Wales
The Crown at Whitebrook, Whitebrook

AA Restaurant of the Year for Wales
The Walnut Tree Inn, Abergavenny

AA Hotel of the Year for Wales
Lake Country House Hotel & Spa, Llangammarch Wells

AA Chefs’ Chef Award
Philip Howard

AA Lifetime Achievement Award
Rick Stein
In this year’s Scottish categories, the **AA Pub of the Year Award for Scotland** was presented to The Torridon Inn, situated on the shores of Loch Torridon, for its excellent combination of good friendly service, locally sourced food, and its wide selection of real ales and malt whiskies. Also offering a true taste of Scotland was the Strathearn restaurant at Gleneagles, which was awarded the **AA Wine Award for Scotland**, sponsored by T&W Wines, for its excellent wine list which included some of Scotland’s rarest malt whiskies. The Kitchin in Edinburgh, winner of the **AA Restaurant of the Year Award for Scotland**, impressed the judges with its commitment to using only the freshest, most seasonal produce and “From Nature to Plate” philosophy; while Norton House Hotel, also in Edinburgh, was named the **AA Hotel of the Year for Scotland** following a £13 million investment resulting in 36 new luxurious bedrooms and a new health club and spa.

The winners of this year’s Welsh categories exhibited standards that were no less exemplary, with the **AA Pub of the Year Award for Wales** going to The Bush Inn in St Hilary, a 16th century inn that has retained much of its original period features, and the **AA Restaurant of the Year Award for Wales** going to The Walnut Tree Inn in Abergavenny, which impressed judges with its fresh, straightforward and flavoursome dishes. The Crown at Whitebrook in Whitebrook received the **AA Wine Award for Wales** (sponsored by T&W Wines) for the wide, original and eclectic range of wines offered. In Llangammarch Wells, Lake Country House Hotel & Spa, an elegant country house hotel that is the perfect destination for a luxury hotel break or romantic getaway, was named the **AA Hotel of the Year for Wales**.

As with last year’s event, the chefs stole the show. Philip Howard, commenting on his **AA Chefs’ Chef of the Year Award**, sponsored by Caterer.com, observed that

**“It is fair to say that we chefs feel intense scrutiny under the judgement of our peers; an award like this is truly a huge endorsement to what we do.”**

The **AA Lifetime Achievement Award** was presented to Rick Stein in recognition of his commitment to increasing the popularity and the understanding of fish and seafood to both the general public and the hospitality industry. The audience gave a standing ovation as the award was announced and Rick Stein gave a short yet moving speech of thanks.

Following the awards presentations, guests took to the dance floor to dance the night away in celebration of their achievements. Press coverage has been considerable and very favourable; details of all winners can be found on www.AAHospitalityAwards.com. Preparations are already underway for the 2009 event, further details of which will be available in your next issue of Intouch.
NEW Red Star and multi-Rosettes

For 2008-2009, we are delighted to introduce the following new Red Star and multi-Rosette establishments:

**New Red Stars**

- The Bildeston Crown, Bildeston
- Cavans, Kirkbean
- Cotswold House, Chipping Campden
- The Four Seasons Hotel Hampshire, Dogmersfield
- Jesmond Dene House, Newcastle
- The Levin, London SW3
- Macdonald Compleat Angler, Marlow
- The New Inn at Coln, Coln
- Nunsmere Hall, Sandiway
- Penmaenuchaf Hall, Dolgellau
- The Torridon, Loch Torridon
- Whitley Ridge Hotel, Brockenhurst

**New multi-Rosettes**

- Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, London W1
- L’Autre Pied, London W1
- La Bécasse, Ludlow
- Black Swan Hotel, Helmsley
- Cotswold House, Chipping Campden
- De Vere Deluxe Cameron House, Balloch
- Driftwood, Portscatho
- L’Escargot - The Picasso Room, London W1
- Fawsley Hall, Fawsley
- Glenapp Castle, Ballantrae
- The Grand, Jersey, St Helier
- The Grove, Rickmansworth
- Hibiscus, London W1
- Hotel du Vin at One Devonshire Gardens, Glasgow
- Hotel Endsleigh, Tavistock
- The Langham, London, London W1
- Lords of the Manor, Upper Slaughter
- Lower Slaughter Manor, Lower Slaughter
- Macdonald Leeming House, Watermillock
- The Neptune Inn & Restaurant, Hunstanton
- Newick Park Hotel & Country Estate, Newick
- Plumed Horse, Edinburgh
- Restaurant Alimentum, Cambridge
- Rhodes W1, London W1
- Rowhill Grange Hotel & Utopia Spa, Wilmington
- Texture, London W1
- Ullinish Country Lodge, Struan
- The Walnut Tree Inn, Abergavenny
- The Well House Hotel, Liskeard
- The West House, Biddenden
- West Stoke House, Chichester
Capitalise on Christmas with Cracking Gift Vouchers

As we all know, it’s never too early to start preparing for Christmas in the hospitality industry. Between Christmas parties, Christmas breaks, Christmas presents and Christmas catering, the festive season can easily be one of the busiest periods in the hotelier’s calendar.

With the advent of online gift vouchers, the approach of Christmas also now heralds a huge opportunity to earn incremental revenue by selling your own catalogue of experiences directly to customers through your website. However, when you’ve sold one hundred and fifty gift vouchers in the first week of December, you have a new problem – who’s going to send them out to your customers in time for the big day?

The AA recommends SK Chase, the hotel gift voucher company, who will set you up with an online gift voucher catalogue to complement your website, and will print and post your gift voucher orders as soon as they’re received, meaning that you won’t get bogged down with the extra admin associated with issuing large numbers of gift vouchers.

“At Hand Picked Hotels our priority is to create a memorable experience for our guests and to do this our teams are completely customer focused. We have looked at ways to outsource certain tasks such as preparing and posting gift vouchers throughout the year and especially in the run-up to Christmas. SK Chase issue the gift vouchers to our customers within 48 hours of their order being placed and even deal with customers directly if they have any delivery queries. That means we get the revenue benefits of selling gift vouchers online and our teams stay free to do what they do best - taking care of our customers.”

Margaret Erstad
Deputy Director of Operations,
Handpicked Hotels
Norton House Hotel – AA Hotel of the Year 2008-2009 for Scotland

And it’s not just the admin side of selling gift vouchers that SK Chase can help with either. Their system collects valuable marketing data that you can use to help plan mailings and marketing materials for your customers, helping you to proactively keep your incremental revenue growing. Plus, as the experts in the hotel gift voucher industry, the SK Chase team are always on hand to provide advice, hints and tips to make sure your gift voucher catalogue brings your customers back to buy again and again.

Make the most of your gift vouchers this Christmas

Issuing gift vouchers is a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of your hotel’s brand - not only with the buyer of the gift voucher, but also with the final recipient. Paying close attention to the packaging and presentation of your gift vouchers will ensure that your customers’ gift-giving and receiving experiences are something very special.

Elaine Gunn, SK Chase Projects & Communications Manager comments; “Research has shown us that buyers of gift vouchers can often experience feelings of guilt while shopping. They might worry that their gift will be seen as a last-minute option by the recipient – maybe a bit thoughtless. Our most successful hotel clients understand this, and package their vouchers as beautiful gifts with gorgeous presentation boxes, tissue paper and even ribbon. All these special extra touches increase the perceived value of the gift voucher, and mitigate the guilty feelings that buyers might be experiencing – leading to increased repeat buying from them. Not only that, but don’t forget that the recipient can be converted into a buyer themselves if they receive something particularly memorable.”

About SK Chase:

SK Chase has created an innovative and user-friendly system, enabling hotels to sell gift vouchers through their own websites. By providing printing and postage services alongside their software, SK Chase allows you to take advantage of the revenue opportunities in the gift voucher market, without the administrative headache.

Call SK Chase on 0870 609 4513, or email enquiries@skchase.com to sign up.
The project began back in 2004 when Arora became the first group in Europe to win a franchise from Accor for its upmarket Sofitel brand. This put Arora in pole position to win the highly prized contract to open the only hotel at Heathrow’s new Terminal 5 that came on stream in March 2008. The acquisition of Le Meridien London Gatwick and subsequent rebranding to Sofitel London Gatwick in October 2004 enabled Arora to get its relationship with Accor off to a head start.

“It’s unusual for five star flagship brands to opt for the franchise route but with Accor we have clinched a really good working relationship with leeway for us to have our own input,” explained Donaldson. “We have enhanced the specification for T5 because we wanted to spend more money on the product to really create the ‘wow’ factor.”

“When you are dealing with projects as large as this the key thing is to gather around you a first class team,” explains Donaldson. “We have our own in-house Arora Development team which includes Stephen Williams, concept architect and Sinead Hughes, quantity surveyor. In January 2008 this team took over the complete management of the project to accelerate the construction. Time was extremely important to us – we were determined to get the hotel opened on time and in budget by July 2008.”

The latest example of ‘luck’ for Surinder Arora, Chairman of Arora International Hotels has just manifested itself in the new 605-bedroom Sofitel London Heathrow at T5 that has just opened to excellent reviews and critical acclaim. “We set out to build a ‘next generation’ airport hotel, and our guests are enthralled by the sheer glamour and luxury of what we have created”, said John Donaldson, Executive Director, Arora International Hotels.

Surinder Arora says of his career so far:

“I work hard and have had some luck. Luck is when preparation meets opportunity - then anything is possible!”

Revealed to the public earlier this year in July, the new 605-bedroom Sofitel London Heathrow at Terminal 5 boasts the best in fine dining, a lobby bar, tea salon and a cocktail bar, as well as a state of the art Health Spa and Gym and 45 meeting rooms. INtouch takes a look at this new luxury hotel and how it came into being.

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Guests at the Sofitel London Heathrow are captivated by the light airy design of the hotel. As Surinder Arora himself says: “This is not an airport hotel, it’s a five star luxury hotel which just happens to be at an airport.” Khuan Chew of KCA International was commissioned to design the interiors and create a stylish boutique feel for the hotel. Khuan was catapulted into the international limelight when she created the interiors of the magnificent Burj al Arab in Dubai and the Four Seasons, Hong Kong.

The tone of the hotel is set perfectly as soon as you enter its magnificent lobby: themed as Antarctica, the highlight is the dramatic water fountain centrepiece. This is one of several signature water features that punctuate the hotel which were commissioned by Surinder from RHS Chelsea winner David Harber. The inspirational Zen Garden, one of three interior gardens, is situated in one of the hotel’s five atria and features another David Harber water feature with lapping waves. This will be a haven of tranquillity for guests to retreat to.

Sofitel London Heathrow introduces the UK to its first experience of ‘haute-couture meetings’ facilities. With 45 individually designed meeting rooms (maximum capacity of 1700 in the 1309m² Arora Suite), a 117 tiered-seated theatre and 3 high-tech boardrooms (with a choice of a private dining room or Chef’s table in Brasserie Roux) everywhere is equipped to the highest standard of technical excellence, with of course world class service. ‘Haute-couture meetings’ includes the newest conference dining experience in ‘Vivre – l’expérience des saveurs’ that can match the pace and style of the event or even the generation of the delegates with its theatrical sensation of 15 styles of cooking.

‘The Spa at Sofitel London Heathrow’ provides a luxurious sanctuary for soothing relaxation and natural treatments using ESPA products. Wellness programmes include a specially formulated ‘Bodyclock’ programme.

With Sofitel (and Arora of course) Life is Magnifique!

Crucial to the success of the hotel is the delivery of five-star service and this is naturally an on-going goal for the management team at the hotel. Vincent Madden, Hotel Manager, Raj Shah, Director of Sales and Marketing and Alan Vukomancic, Director of Food and Beverage have completed the first hurdle of recruiting all the key staff and opening the hotel. “Now we want to realise our vision of becoming the world’s leading luxury airport hotel and meetings venue,” said Donaldson.

Sofitel London Heathrow,
Terminal 5,
London Heathrow Airport TW6 2GD
+44 (0) 20 8757 7777
enquiries@sofitelheathrow.com     www.sofitel.com

The ground floor level of the hotel reveals itself as a series of ‘rooms’ running down the central spine of Avenue Sofitel. Striped stone ‘rugs’ lead guests on an enjoyable journey through the hotel, sampling the five different bars and restaurants that provide the hotel with fun, life and activity.

Bringing a touch of fabled French gastronomy to Heathrow, Chef Consultant Albert Roux oversees the hotel’s fine dining restaurant Brasserie Roux offering the best of French regional cooking. ‘Vivre – l’expérience des saveurs’ is the hotel’s second restaurant with five live cooking theatre kitchens and this is under the leadership of executive chef Julian Jenkins. ‘Tea 5’ is an exquisite Tea Salon with its own Tea Master and signature delicacies. The Icelandic blue Sphere Bar is the ideal meeting place – informal, yet with a vibrant atmosphere. For signature cocktails taken from London’s hippest bars, soak up the atmosphere of the more intimate Library Bar.
Save time and money with beacon

beacon is the leading purchasing specialist for the UK hospitality industry. We pool the buying power of thousands of small and medium sized independent businesses to negotiate trading terms collectively and secure the kind of prices and service normally reserved for much larger organisations.

We work in close partnership with our members to help us to really understand their needs, allowing us to provide better pricing and exceptional deals, with over 130 well-known local and national suppliers.

With beacon membership, you can enjoy:

- Reduced prices on a huge range of products and services
- A directory of beacon suppliers covering all of your purchasing requirements
- A personal account management team
- Regular and exclusive special offers
- Easy ordering and hassle-free monthly billing with one direct debit for all of your bills
- Access to your account details online
- Expert advice and dedicated purchasing support
- Further savings through our unique loyalty scheme ‘Powerpoints’

And for AA members, we’re doing even more to save you time and money! – Join beacon today and you will receive half price membership in your first year and in your second year, double the number of powerpoints available to our standard members.

Joining is easy

Call 01904 695588 to chat to one of our beacon member services team and find out more about how beacon can save you time and money.

Alternatively, you can send us an email at all@beaconpurchasing.co.uk, giving your name and contact details and we will be in touch.

from freshly baked breads to conference spreads

The Cross at Kingussie is a family-run, five-star AA rated Restaurant with Rooms located in the lovely Highland village of Kingussie within the stunning Cairngorm National Park, surrounded by mountains, rivers and lochs. The award-winning property has eight comfortable bedrooms and a fine restaurant using high-quality, locally sourced produce. The restaurant holds 3 AA Rosettes.

Owner and former Chief AA Hotel Inspector David Young has been using the online booking system eviivo frontdesk® since last May and tells us about his experience so far.

“When taking-up frontdesk, we wanted to capture more online bookings, particularly as we were about to pass our entire accommodation stock online rather than just manage an allocation. Our partnership with eviivo would open up other distribution channels such as the AA, Expedia and lastminute.com. We required an efficient way of ensuring that we wouldn’t miss out on bookings when we’re away. We were also looking for ways in which we could have much more control and flexibility over rates and packages. I was always reasonably confident that in choosing eviivo frontdesk® our immediate requirements would be met and I was very pleasantly surprised at how quickly we have become comfortable with the new system.

We were immediately happier with the manner in which our online reservations were being handled.

The system requires much less management than before and we are more confident now that we are unlikely to overbook. It wasn’t too long before we started to notice bookings from distribution channels that we had not previously had available to us.

Service levels from the outset have been extremely high. Set-up was painless and support has been plentiful and easy to get. Recording new bookings is extremely easy. Updating prices and information is also pretty straightforward. The diary is excellent, and I absolutely love the text alerts of new bookings.

I have been extremely encouraged and impressed with not only eviivo’s willingness to take suggestions and give them serious consideration but also their commitment to keeping up with their competitors and other potential new developments. I do like their positive “can do” attitude and their flexibility to work just as closely with smaller businesses as with larger organisations.”

David Young from The Cross at Kingussie is impressed with frontdesk

David benefited from the free frontdesk offer that is currently available to all AA Members. However, please note that the free offer is running out soon! Call eviivo on 0800 422 0088 or email enquiries@eviivo.com for your last chance to get frontdesk for free.
The current economic climate is proving to be a worrying time for the hospitality industry. With the general public tightening their belts and spending less money on accommodation and eating out, some businesses are finding it difficult to prosper, with new operators, particularly independent establishments, feeling the heat.

How does this bode for your business’s future? We asked four prominent figures in the hospitality industry to give their advice on how to ride out the storm:

**Bob Cotton, chief executive of the British Hospitality Association**

“Recent government fiscal measures have damaged industry confidence; now the economic situation is exacerbating the challenges we face. For the next 6 -12 months, businesses will have to hunker down, crucially maintain value, promote business carefully and control costs fiercely.

What we don’t want is any more government regulation of any kind. The instant response to a slowing economy is to cut prices but adding value would be the wiser choice for any business.”

**Andrew McKenzie, managing director of The Vineyard at Stockcross and chairman of the Master Innholders**

“In previous downturns reducing rates to grow volume was an often used tactic. It’s easy to say “don’t do it!” from the ivory tower of an established hotel business but it was sometimes essential if you were a small operation desperate for cash.

This is no longer an option this time around as costs have soared and margins are severely pinched; working hard to grow market share is the only answer.

In the good times we have not had to be so disciplined in the basic practices; two areas where a bit more attention could make a huge difference are:

**Debbie Taylor, managing director of the Old Course Hotel, Golf Resort & Spa and chairman of the British Hospitality Association Scotland Committee**

“We all hear the phrase credit crunch day in and day out and the tougher market conditions are worrying factors for the hospitality industry. A knee jerk reaction might prompt you to think about lowering room rates or filling your hotel with “2 for 1” deals. I would caution against lowering prices for short term gain, as this means you’ll have to cut back a service or investment in your product somewhere down the line. In the long run, it’s better to value-add.

It’s not just the luxury operators that should be adding value to the guest experience; we all have our part to play in building a positive reputation around the world. As Chairman of the British Hospitality Association Scotland Committee, I am passionate about raising standards across all sectors of our industry to position Scotland as a high-quality destination. We can, and should, compete with countries like Switzerland, where a reputation for quality is present throughout the entire industry.”

**David Taylor, sales director of QHotels, AA Hotel Group of the Year 2008-2009**

“It’s an old cliché but tough environments bring more focus to a business; forcing management to look closer at financial management, investment returns and procurement. This can lead to quality savings and a tighter run business. However, my message to the industry is that we do not use the ‘credit crunch’ to compromise on quality or service standards, no matter how much of a quick fix this may look. Now is the time that our service offering needs to be better than ever, be it food quality, customer service levels, staff excellence and the total guest experience. We need to make sure our loyal customers remain loyal, our returning guests keep returning, and new visitors see the benefit of our products. It is these people that will bring us through tough business environments and leave us healthier businesses on the other side.”
Garmin, the world’s leading mobile navigation company, has launched a range of AA Lifestyle Guides that are available online for download onto a Garmin nüvi sat-nav device. The AA Hotel, Restaurant, B&B, Pub, Golf, Camping and Caravanning and Days Out guides are all available, priced until 31 October at an introductory offer price of £3.99 per title or £19.99 for all seven.

The downloadable guides are simple and easy to use: once installed on the sat-nav, a list which contains the relevant guide’s points of interest that are closest to the user’s location will appear on the screen. Once the user selects a point of interest, the main contact information for the establishment will be shown; the user can then tap “map” to see where the establishment is located on the map. If the user taps “more”, detailed information about the establishment, including the AA rating, review, number of rooms, facilities and parking will be displayed. All data provided is current and will be regularly updated to ensure that your establishment’s details are always up-to-date.

There has already been a large number of downloads since the facility was launched on Friday 19 September and with the numbers rising, it looks to be a big success. And with your establishments’ details available with one tap on the screen, you may well find that you receive business from sat-nav users looking for a stop for a meal or a night’s accommodation while on the road.

Do you have an excellent housekeeper? For the second year running, AA Hotel Services, in partnership with Northmace & Hendon, manufacturers of specialist products for the professional hotelier, with customers in over 100 countries worldwide, will be awarding the title of AA Housekeeper of the Year to one individual. The award recognises outstanding commitment and performance, identifying a housekeeper who goes above and beyond the call of duty.

If your housekeeper fulfils the following criteria and is a star member of your team, you may wish to consider submitting a nomination. Your housekeeper must:

- have been in post for a minimum of 12 months
- manage a team of staff
- contribute to the training of the staff
- bring something extra to the role

Later in the year, we may conduct validation visits involving a brief interview with the nominees. The Housekeeper of the Year 2009 will be announced in January 2009, and a presentation will take place at the winner’s establishment.
Following the outstanding success of the AA Centenary Awards in September (see pages 4-7), we have dedicated our letters section to some of the comments we have received from our delighted winners and guests…

Wednesday 3 September 2008
Dear AA Hotel Services,

Congratulations on a successful and memorable evening at the Centenary Awards dinner. It was obvious that a great deal of hard work had been put into the evening and your kind hospitality was very much appreciated.

I wish you continued success in the challenging role you play in our great industry.

Kind regards,
Harry Murray MBE,
Lucknam Park, Bath

Thursday 4 September 2008
Dear AA Hotel Services,

We wanted to thank you for our awards and also for a fantastic night on Tuesday in London. We had such a great night, the food was wonderful, the entertainment unique and the company as always charming. The awards mean a lot to us and all the staff and it is so satisfying to be recognised for the hard efforts.

Once again thank you for all your support.

Yours sincerely,
Daniel & Rohaise Rose-Bristow,
The Torridon Inn, Torridon

Tuesday 9 September 2008
Dear AA Hotel Services,

It is with pleasure I write to you to express my elation for being awarded our fourth Rosette for The Greenhouse at last week’s AA Centenary Awards dinner. Antonin Bonnet, Jean-Marie Miorada and the team have worked relentlessly to keep The Greenhouse at the forefront of fine dining in London. This acknowledgment is a reward of their tireless, persistent efforts, hard work and dedication. It is with immense pride that Antonin and Jean-Marie returned to the restaurant to share and continue to celebrate the success with the rest of the team.

I also wish to congratulate you and everyone at the AA for the service you have provided to the British hospitality industry, and the great contribution you have made over the past 100 years.

Marlon Abela,
Marlon Abela Restaurant Corporation

Wednesday 10 September 2008
Dear AA Hotel Services,

Just a quick note to thank you for entertaining us in such style last Tuesday evening. The AA Awards are always a grand occasion however this year’s event certainly befitted the 100 years you were celebrating and I know it will be an evening remembered by all attendees.

Yours sincerely,
Andrew Stembridge,
Chewton Glen, New Milton

Wednesday 4 September 2008
Dear AA Hotel Services,

Dear AA Hotel Services,

We wanted to thank you for our awards and also for a fantastic night on Tuesday in London. We had such a great night, the food was wonderful, the entertainment unique and the company as always charming. The awards mean a lot to us and all the staff and it is so satisfying to be recognised for the hard efforts.

Once again thank you for all your support.

Yours sincerely,
Daniel & Rohaise Rose-Bristow,
The Torridon Inn, Torridon

This is your opportunity to send in your comments and questions, whether its reflective feedback on an article or a question you may have for the Hotel Services team.

Get in touch...

Hotel Services Customer Support
All establishment enquiries, including inspections, reports, ratings, signage, training and consultancy.
01256 844455
HotelServicesCustomerSupport@theAA.com

Hotel Services Accounts
All financial and payment enquiries.
01256 491541

Advertising Sales
Adding photographs to guide listings, advertising in the guides.
01256 491545
AdvertisingSales@theAA.com

Lifestyle Guides
For information on your guide listing and establishment questionnaires.
LifestyleGuides@theAA.com

Hotel Services Marketing
Logo requests, on and offline promotional opportunities, award event enquiries.
01256 494974
jennifer.armstrong@theAA.com

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Submitting articles/letters for the members’ newsletter.
01256 494974
I|Touch@theAA.com

Online Establishment Listings
Change your online information on theAA.com, add a photograph or hotline.
01256 492654
sally.waite@theAA.com

Booking.com
Online room reservations service.
0800 085 6585
theAA@booking.com

Online Table Booking
Online restaurant reservations service.
020 7299 2945
lucy.taylor@toptable.co.uk

AA Centenary Awards
www.AAHospitalityAwards.com
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AA Routeplanner
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eviivo
Real-time room booking service for small hotels and guest accommodation.
0800 422 0088
enquiries@eviivo.com

AA Hotel Services
14th Floor, Fanum House, Basing View, Basingstoke, Hants, RG21 4EA.
General Office Facsimile
01256 491647
www.theAA.com/travel
www.AAHotels.com