

Choice Hotels International Marks 15 Years Since Creating the 'Soft Brand' Segment with Ascend Hotel Collection

Innovative and flexible option shifted the hotel landscape to benefit owners and travelers alike

ROCKVILLE, Md., April 24, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- This year marks the 15th year since Choice Hotels International, Inc. (NYSE: CHH), one of the world's largest lodging franchisors, launched the industry's soft brand segment with the introduction of the Ascend Hotel Collection. In the intervening 15 years, the soft brand segment has become one of the highest growth segments in hospitality by enabling independent, unique hotels to access national sales and marketing platforms, reservation systems and loyalty programs without losing their character and community focus – appealing to both independent owners and the next generation of travelers.

The Ascend Hotel Collection, made up of one-of-a-kind, independent, historic, boutique and resort hotels, has stood the test of time as the original soft brand. Among the first were the Golden Hotel in Golden, Colorado, Kress Inn in De Pere, Wisconsin, and Hotel Bothwell in Sedalia, Missouri – all still part of the Collection. Today, the Collection now heralds more than 330 upscale Ascend hotels globally and continues to appeal to franchise owners with many hotels having been in families for multiple generations.

"In 2008, amid a recession, Ascend Hotel Collection's launch shifted the entire hotel landscape for owners, developers and guests. Fifteen years later, Choice is one of the most innovative and flexible lodging companies franchisees can work with as we continue expanding our upscale offering," said Janis Cannon, senior vice president, Upscale Brands, Choice Hotels. "As independent operators may again face economic headwinds, the evolution of the Ascend Hotel Collection is a prime example of how Choice is driving more growth potential by allowing owners to maintain their unique identities."

By joining Ascend, independent owners have access to Choice's proprietary systems and distribution platform, including the **choiceADVANTAGE** property management system; the **choiceEDGE** guest reservation platform; and **ChoiceMAX**, a mobile-friendly revenue management tool that continuously adapts to changes in the market using real-time data. With an uncertain economic outlook, connection to Choice's platforms and its 56+ million Choice Privileges loyalty program members offers increased stability without sacrificing independence and the bespoke experiences that are increasingly popular among travelers.

The evolution of Ascend Hotel Collection over the last 15 years includes:

- 2008 – Choice Hotels launches Ascend Collection program; offers unique, boutique and historic hotels opportunity to leverage Choice's powerful distribution network
- 2013 – 100th domestic Ascend opens (Chicago)
- 2016 – Ascend forms strategic alliance with Bluegreen Vacations, which continues to evolve and grow both the brand and Choice guest experience as it gives access to resort destinations
- 2021 – Ascend Hotel Collection outperforms the industry's Upscale Chain Scale in RevPAR by 26 percentage points in second quarter of 2021, compared to 2019
- 2023 – 15th Anniversary of Ascend Hotel Collection, with over 330 hotels globally; Ascend Hotel Collection has one of the largest number of properties across the category

Over the last 15 years, Ascend Hotel Collection properties have appealed to guests who are seeking distinct experiences woven into the culture and fabric of the communities where each of the properties is located – appealing to the mindset of the experiential traveler looking to immerse themselves in their destination.

While each Ascend Hotel Collection property is unique and independent, the quality of service and an Upscale stay are consistent. To learn more about the Ascend Hotel Collection, or to book your next stay, visit: www.choicehotels.com/ascend.

About Choice Hotels®

Choice Hotels International, Inc. (NYSE: CHH) is one of the largest lodging franchisors in the world. A challenger in the upscale segment and a leader in midscale and extended stay, Choice® has nearly 7,500 hotels, representing almost 630,000 rooms, in 47 countries and territories. A diverse portfolio of 22 brands that run the gamut from full-service, upper upscale properties to midscale, extended stay and economy enables Choice® to meet travelers' needs in more places and for more occasions while driving more value for franchise owners and shareholders. The award-winning Choice Privileges® loyalty program and co-brand credit card options provide members with a fast and easy way to earn reward nights and personalized perks. For more information, visit www.choicehotels.com.

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For further information: Moe Rama, Tel: 301-592-6136, Email: MediaRelations@choicehotels.com

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