

## From Resorts to Urban Destinations

The Romans were the first to enjoy the pleasures of resorts, which were built around public baths located at natural mineral springs like those found in Bath, England. Visiting these natural hot springs baths and enjoying the relaxing atmosphere of the destination became the primary reason for travel. However, with the fall of the Roman Empire, travel for pleasure and leisure pursuits disappeared. When travel once again became safe and practical during the Industrial Revolution, the popularity of visiting resorts for enjoyment and pampering once again spread throughout Europe. With newfound wealth and leisure time, members of the upper classes sought pleasurable places outside of the industrialized cities to enjoy the Sun, sea, sand, snow, and more.

The first resorts in America, like their European counterparts (especially those found in the Czech Republic), were built around spas and focused on health and escape from the daily rigors of life. Many of these early spas—such as The Greenbrier at White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia; The Homestead at Hot Springs, Virginia; Ein Bokek near the Dead Sea; and Karlsbad in the Czech Republic—have since grown into world-class destinations. Although these early resorts were built around spas and the idea of rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation, later resorts began to expand by appealing to a broader cross section of market segments. To these new resort-goers, recreation became more important than simply a restful break, and a wider variety of activities was added to the mix of facilities and services provided, including retail shops, recreational facilities, and casinos.<sup>1</sup>

**Resorts** are now much more than just health spas or locations with a single purpose, catering to a single target segment. Resorts are self-sufficient holiday complexes, master planned with the ambitious goal of captivating the guests and giving them no reason to leave the premise. They are places to make social contacts, attend social occasions, and improve health and fitness. In fact, both **resort destinations**, such as Tuscany, Italy, and Vail, Colorado, and **destination resorts**, such as Disney World and the Palm Island Resort off the coast of Dubai, now appeal to very diverse market segments ranging from individuals and families to conventions and corporate meeting groups. Many of these resorts are marketed as timeshares, as previously discussed. You can find settings that fit the description of resort destinations in communities and small towns such as Jackson Hole, Wyoming, as well as in destination locations such as Mackinac Island, Michigan. Visitors also enjoy self-contained resort properties such as Marriott's Tan-Tar-A Resort, Golf Club and Spa at Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri, and Sheraton's San Marcos Resort near Phoenix, Arizona. Certain cities around the world have even developed into urban tourist destinations. Hong Kong, Paris, Rome, Vienna, San Francisco, San Antonio, Seattle, Singapore, and Vancouver can all claim to be great destinations that encourage and promote **urban tourism**. Whatever the location, tourist destinations are special places that meet guests' desires for rest, relaxation, fun, excitement, and entertainment, even when visits are combined with the demanding schedules of business and professional meetings.

## Classifying Destinations

There are several different types of locations and properties that can be classified as destinations. Although each of these locations may share some of the same activities, facilities, and amenities, the operational issues they face, such as staffing, meeting varying guest expectations, and managing cash flows, will differ depending on geographic location, size, markets served, and primary season of operation. What is common with all destinations is, "a geographical cluster of tourism resources rather than a political barrier" (p. 340).<sup>2</sup>

Operational issues were probably not on the minds of early resort developers, because many resorts and destinations were simply developed in locations with natural beauty, favorable climates, and easy transportation access. In fact, one popular classification system