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Inspirational Woman: Leslie Kouhana | President, Maisons Pariente

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Leslie Kouhana, the eldest of the Pariente sisters, started out in asset management at a major international commercial real estate company, Unibail.

She went on to join the family business where she has worked to develop various real estate and hotel projects for 15 years. For each project, she builds and manages the teams, coordinates the contractors and selects the talent to create the identity envisaged by the family.

The close collaboration with the Oetker Collection for L'Apogée Courchevel made her a genuine expert in the luxury hotel industry and eager to launch Maisons Pariente, the family's self-designed hotel collection.

Tell us a bit about yourself, background and your current role

I grew up in Paris, and I am the oldest of 4 siblings. After studying finance, I specialized in real estate and I am now the President of **Maisons Pariente**. For the past 17 years I have been in charge of the real estate investments of our family-owned company. A couple of years ago, we had the opportunity to diversify into luxury hospitality, a sector that has always fascinated me; and created Maisons Pariente that operates three 5-star hotels in France: **Lou Pinet** in Saint-Tropez is just 5 minutes from the famous Place des Lices, **Crillon Le Brave** in Provence with an outstanding view on Mont Ventoux and **Le Coucou** in Méribel with direct access to slopes.



The hotel industry is an industry of service that includes a broad spectrum of business topics such as finance, marketing, sales, human resources, management, design, quality of service and construction. What interests me most about my job is having a 360-degree overview and being able to build around each project by using a team with various talents.

Did you ever sit down and plan your career?

No, I never made a career plan per se, however I have always been driven by the desire to do well and better myself. After my studies, I worked at Unibail, a Real Estate company specialising in shopping centres, where I learned a lot. Little did I know that just two years later I would join my father and help him develop our family real estate and become an entrepreneur in my own right. I truly believe that the passion and determination that I put into my projects is often the key to their successes.

Have you faced any challenges along the way?

Of course, I have experienced many challenges, but I believe the most important challenges have been the ones I set myself every day. Sometimes, these challenges seem insurmountable and require a lot of effort but it is these challenges that provide the biggest reward and satisfaction when you've achieved them. My mantra is "You must do the thing you think you cannot do". (Eleanor Roosevelt)

What has been your biggest achievement to date?

The launch of Maisons Pariente and having opened three hotels in just two years, which at the time it was very ambitious, but we did it together!

Alongside my father and sister, we really started Maisons Pariente with a blank page and built this hotel collection stone by stone. As with any development project, the most important aspect is the foundations in which you build your business from, creating a base from which you build up. We had to surround ourselves with the right talented and experienced collaborators from the very beginning and today, we have a team of passionate collaborators who work daily to promote our properties.

What one thing do you believe has been a major factor in you achieving success?

In my opinion, there are two key factors to achieving success. The first one is to work, work, work and of course teamwork! The second is passion. At Maisons Pariente, we pride ourselves on authenticity, personalised service, attention to detail, and creating a feeling of anticipation within our guests. These are our key values which enable our guests and employees to feel at home in our hotels.

How do you feel about mentoring? Have you mentored anyone or are you someone's mentee?

My father is a self-taught businessman, a true entrepreneur at heart. I was lucky enough to work side by side with him for many years and he has certainly been my mentor, often advising me in my professional choices.

I would like to think that one day, my three boys will consider me as a mentor! And who knows... the family adventure might one day seduce them too!

If you could change one thing to accelerate the pace of change for Gender Equality, what would it be?

I believe that the place of women in society reflects the development of society. Inspirational leaders are making headway with empowering women, however there is a lot of work to be done. In many countries women are not in managerial roles or positions of power and this has to change. I believe that through education and setting examples, we will be able to change mentalities and set new standards for generations to come.

If you could give one piece of advice to your younger self what would it be?

Do what you love, and you'll never work another day in your life.

What is your next challenge and what are you hoping to achieve in the future?

My next challenge is the opening of our fourth 5-star hotel "Le Grand Mazarin" which will be opening in the heart of Le Marais in Paris in March 2022. Up until now, we have only worked on seasonal vacation destination hotels, so this will be our first urban hotel which will be open all year long. This is an exceptional opportunity for us and we fully intend to be as Parisian, bold and cosmopolitan as the Marais district.

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