



# London to Zurich

ON A WHISTLE-STOP TOUR OF EUROPE, **MARK MOBIUS** SATISFIES HIS THIRST FOR CULTURE AND MEETS WITH SOME SURPRISINGLY CALM CLIENTS AND FINANCIERS



## VIVA ESPAÑA

**ABOVE** Mark Mobius at Barcelona waterfront

**TOP** London's favourite store, Harrods

**W**ITH STOCK MARKETS crashing all over the world, it's important for me to get out to see clients, explain what is going on, what we are doing about it, and what they should be doing. The message is clear: don't panic, instead look at the steep declines in equity prices as a wonderful buying opportunity. To reach as many clients as possible, we went from Hong Kong to London, on to Barcelona, Geneva and, finally, Zurich.

After our London board meeting and client visits, we took the opportunity to catch up on the theatre scene. The daughter of my Polish colleague wanted to see *The Lion King*. I was a little apprehensive since I thought it would be for children, but I was delighted by the show's colour, music and imaginative costumes. The next night it was *Hairspray*, which I loved. Finally, we saw *Zorro*. I had enjoyed a few of the *Zorro* movies but this was quite different, not only because it was a musical but because the music was by The Gypsy Kings. Very entertaining.

I tend to eat late, so we had dinner after the shows each night. After *The Lion King*, we ate at the Joe Allen restaurant, a traditional actor's hangout in the basement of a building not far from One Aldwych where we were staying. It was 10pm and the place was packed. During the weekend we also had a chance to do some shopping at Harrods. It's still the most interesting and exciting

store in the world. While I was buying a tie in the menswear section, I was surprised to find Stanley Ho doing some shopping and said hello.

After London we headed for one of my favourite cities, Barcelona, with its unique architecture and delicious food. Our schedule was tight, so we hopped on a Netjets Citation Bravo for Barcelona. Owned by Warren Buffet's Berkshire Hathaway, Netjets is an impressive operation. The pilots were attentive and skilled at flying through rough weather en route.

At the EuroFinance International Cash and Treasury Management Conference, I gave a speech before finance and treasury managers from all over Europe and was surprised by the relative serenity of the delegates, given that the entire financial world was in chaos after the failure of Bear Stearns, Lehman's and other banks. Even in Europe banks were failing, but the finance managers didn't exhibit any particular panic. In fact, some of those banks that were under pressure had elaborate booths in the cavernous exhibition hall promoting their money management and treasury expertise.

Since the conference hall was at the newly developed waterfront area, we stayed at the modern AB Skipper Hotel overlooking the beach. After the conference, we jumped on bikes supplied by the hotel and headed for the waterfront esplanade, the Moll d'Espanya, with its restaurants, aquarium, walkways and promenades.

Barcelona has done a wonderful job of beauti-

fyng the waterfront, so it was filled with people enjoying the sea air and sun. There were lots of cyclists around as the city has a unique rental system where bikes are parked in strategic locations. Residents slip a magnetic card in a machine and one of the bikes is automatically unlocked and ready for use. There's a lot to see on the waterfront and one of the most impressive sights is the giant solar panel at the Barcelona Contemporary Culture Centre. We stopped at the Escriba restaurant on the boardwalk and had delicious broiled fresh fish and paella. The unique thing about Barcelona is the fact that the restaurant menus, company reports and other documents are written in Catalan as well as Spanish, so we had fun figuring out how the various Spanish words are expressed in the regional Catalan language.

We boarded another Netjet on our way to Geneva, but this time it was a Citation Excel which was comfortably larger than the one we had from London, so we were able to stand upright in the cabin. It was another round of client visits in Geneva. The Swissôtel Metropole Hotel on Lake Geneva is my old haunt but I was

### *Norman Foster was hired to expand and refurbish the Dolder Grand Hotel and he has done an amazing job*

pleased to see that refurbishments had brightened the reception area. The cocktail lounge opposite the reception is a stylish way to meet friends.

I enjoy train travel so I took the opportunity to take the very comfortable Swiss train from Geneva to Zürich. In Zürich, we checked into the ultra-modern and chic Hyatt Hotel, where the service is impeccable and the rooms are spacious. After a Friday packed with meetings, we checked out and moved to the Dolder Grand Hotel. It's only a 15-minute drive from the centre of Zürich, but the landscape quickly transforms into lush greenery as you go up the mountain. I was a little apprehensive as I remembered the Dolder as being rather old and worn out. But when I arrived I was thunderstruck by the transformation that had taken place.

Norman Foster had been hired to expand and refurbish the hotel and he has done an amazing job. The main 1899 Victorian building, with its high Germanic towers, has been retained and a low-rise, semi-circular wing now embraces the building and includes fabulous spa facilities. The main entrance is now spacious and gives a spectacular view of the city and the surrounding mountains. Needless to say, the service matched the US\$300 million transformation. My room had huge floor-to-ceiling windows with magnificent



views of the mountains. The hotel was originally a spa hotel and that function is alive and well with extravagant new facilities which include a large indoor pool leading out to a heated outdoor jacuzzi overlooking the forest and mountains. I took a few hours and had the full massage treatment by a truly expert masseur.

While in Zürich we visited the Swiss National Museum housed in an inspiring neo-Gothic Romanesque building which has interesting exhibits telling the story of Switzerland from prehistoric times to the Reformation and early industrial age.

Next, we headed for the famous Confiserie Sprungli. It was rainy and cold so the cafe was packed, but it was well worth a visit to have the cappuccino piled high with thick milk foam and the rich rum cake topped with raspberries and heavy whipped cream.

That evening we headed for the historic Kronenhalle restaurant. This restaurant was made famous by the recently deceased Hulda Zumsteg, whose 1967 Varlin portrait hangs prominently at the entrance. We had the delicious speciality of braised red cabbage with roast venison and consomme with liver dumplings.

Zumsteg's son Gustav was an art collector and over the years many artists and authors have visited, including James Joyce, Marino Marini, Marc Chagall, Joan Miro, Germaine Richier, Willy Guggenheim and Alberto and Diego Giacometti, some of whose works can be seen on the restaurant's wall. Gustav's silk business resulted in friendships with Cristobal Balenciaga, Christian Dior, Jacques Fath, Coco Chanel, Hubert de Givenchy and Yves Saint Laurent. At one point, Balenciaga even sent his cook to Kronenhalle to learn about Swiss cuisine.

There was so much more to see and do in Zurich, but sadly our schedule called for us move on. Until next time. ■



#### EURO CASH

**ABOVE**  
Barcelona  
conference hall  
**TOP** Mobius at  
the Dolder Grand  
Hotel in Zürich