By Ann Patmalnieks | Photography Magnus Lejhall | Published 27 May 2026
Hotellrevyn

THE PORTRAIT / MICHELLE CHAMOUN

“My Guests Become My Friends”

Michelle Chamoun holds the golden keys to exceptional hospitality. As concierge at Hotel Rival in Stockholm, she makes every guest’s stay feel special. But there is one wish even she can’t grant.

Michelle Chamoun spent 20 years working as a licensed optician. But as she approached 50, she felt ready for a change. That decision eventually led her to become one of the select concierges entitled to wear the golden keys of Les Clefs d’Or on her lapel.

“It all started when I took an evening course to become an authorised Stockholm guide while I was still working. That was when I felt I’d found my calling. I began thinking, ‘Actually, the world of travel and hospitality sounds pretty wonderful.’”

She enrolled in a two-year vocational college programme. Many of her fellow students had their sights set on management roles, but Michelle had something else in mind.
“I wanted to work with visitors and guests, and offer service that goes above and beyond.”



Michelle Chamoun is also an authorised Stockholm guide — knowledge that comes in handy in her role as concierge. Photo: Magnus Lejhall

From Stockholm to Paris

Michelle completed work placements at hotels ranging from three to five stars in Stockholm and Paris. She worked at the front desks of Clarion Skanstull and Hotel Kung Carl in Stockholm before moving to Hotel Rival, one of the relatively few hotels with a dedicated concierge. When the previous concierge left, Michelle stepped into the role.

She stays in touch with guests before, during and after their visits. Much of that happens by email, but guests can also find her at the Guest Service desk.

“There’s so much that’s worth booking ahead — concerts, trains, excursions, hair appointments. And guests sometimes get in touch after they’ve left, perhaps because they didn’t have time to pick something up. I can help with that too.”

“I Visit Every New Exhibition”

What makes a concierge different from a receptionist?
“A concierge knows the city inside out and can make recommendations that really suit each guest. We keep up to date through ongoing training and visits to new places. I go to every new exhibition. But I also check guests in and out. The more you know about your hotel, the better.”

What do guests at Hotel Rival ask for most often?
“They’re looking for something beyond the usual tourist sights. I might suggest the graffiti walls in Snösätra, a wildlife safari just two hours from here, or a jazz concert out in the Stockholm archipelago.”

Becoming a member of the international Les Clefs d’Or association takes dedication. Applicants must have worked in hotels for at least five years, including three as a concierge. They also need recommendations from two sponsors in the Swedish Hotel Porters Association, followed by an inspection and an interview.

GET TO KNOW MICHELLE

- Her work: Concierge at Hotel Rival in Stockholm. An authorised Stockholm guide who offers tours in French, Arabic and English. She also speaks Italian, Spanish and German.
- Her associations: Member of Les Clefs d’Or, the international concierge association, and the Swedish Hotel Porters Association, the world’s oldest association for porters and concierges. She serves on the Swedish association’s board and is deputy events coordinator.
- Away from work: Family, travel and cultural outings. She also sings French chansons in a band.

What did you highlight during the membership process?
“I want to offer the human connection that AI can never provide. People appreciate that personal touch. My guests become my friends. I’ve had some truly lovely conversations with them.”

“Once, a regular guest from England became seriously ill in the middle of the night and had to go to the emergency department. I explained that she might have a long wait there. So I looked after her daughter and asked whether she’d be happy for me to take her home with me, where I have children and a dog.”

The One Wish She Can’t Grant

Are you active in Les Clefs d’Or?
“Yes. In April, I attended the annual congress in Australia, where 600 concierges from around the world came together. It was a fantastic week!”

Is there anything you can’t arrange?
“Yes — when guests ask whether they can meet the hotel’s owner, Benny Andersson. I have to say, ‘I’m sorry, but no.’ He doesn’t just drop by to say hello to guests.”