

Unusual Places, Unusual Reasons

Touring nontraditional locations around the globe

Written by **WILLIAM EDWARDS**

Nontraditional franchise locations outside the U.S. and Canada often end up in unusual places for unusual reasons and must fit into the space available. Often the size of space is smaller than the U.S. model, and the floor plan has to adapt to strange sizes. Here's a look at some nontraditional international franchise locations:

- “The Chili’s flagship restaurant in Shanghai, China, is located along the picturesque riverside of the Huangpu River with views of the iconic colonial buildings situated at The Bund. The restaurant boasts floor-to-ceiling foldable windows across the entire restaurant, which are opened during spring and fall to transform the space into an indoor/outdoor dining experience.” —Tony De Graaf, global culinary operations, Brinker International.
- “One of the most unusual Johnny Rockets locations was a post-apocalyptic themed food-trailer park between Dubai and Abu Dhabi, where all trailers kept with that post-apocalyptic theme, called ‘last exit.’” —James Walker, CEO of Frisch’s Restaurants Inc., chief culinary and concept officer at Experiential Brands, and former president of Johnny Rockets.
- “We are very proud of the first Carl’s Jr. restaurant in Switzerland. Bahnhof Schaffhausen is a key point in the train system not only in Switzerland, but also in Germany. Passengers on long-distance trains from Stuttgart to Zürich and from Basel to Friedrichshafen stop here as do shorter local routes.” —Marc Mushkin, vice president, international franchise sales and development, CKE Restaurants Inc.
- “Denny’s in Central America is a generational event that appeals to all. The facility is typically 35% larger and has something for everyone, a menu that appeals to seniors and includes an indoor play facility for kids. In the Philippines, the approach is significantly different but still centered around family dining. The facility is typically 35% smaller with a limited menu that’s more localized and appeals to everyone.” —Doug Wong, founder & managing partner, CS5 Global Franchise Service.
- “The New Horizons Computer Learning Centers IT training franchise encountered an unusual challenge in Saudi Arabia, where cultural norms require separate buildings and classrooms for men and women students. Our innovative master franchisee in Riyadh turned this apparent obstacle into an extremely successful and dominant market share. They located the NHCLC IT Ladies Training Center in a ladies-only building along with a franchised ESL training center and their own non-franchised ladies fitness center and French-styled café.” —Rob Shaw, president, Shaw Meridian.
- “Tutu School, a boutique-style ballet school that caters to children 18 months to 8 years old, has a location in the U.K. in Salisbury in a converted granary. It is a beautiful place for young children’s magical introduction to the joy of dancing.” —Alison McElroy, founder & CEO, Kaleidoscope Growth Advisors.





UNIQUE SITES

Over the years, Build-A-Bear Workshop has operated stores in major tourist locations, including Downtown Disney. Two of the most famous stores outside the U.S. and Canada are in Copenhagen in the Tivoli Gardens, the world's second-oldest amusement park. There is also a large Build-A-Bear Workshop store in the famous Shanghai Disneyland Park.

In Manila in the Philippines, there are twelve Randy's Donuts shops. On a busy street corner in downtown Manila is a miniature kiosk version with a large donut on top, similar to the original Randy's Donuts shop with the 30-foot-wide donut on top near Los Angeles International Airport.

Several years ago, my company helped Round Table Pizza enter the Mongolia market. The licensee had a global construction company that was building a new town near the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. They opened a wildly successful Round Table Pizza restaurant that was the only Western F&B brand in the country at the time.

In the 1990s, the AlphaGraphics quick-print chain opened its first store in China in the basement of the World Trade Center in Beijing. It took 10 Chinese people to carry a 2,000-pound Xerox digital print machine down two sets of escalators to the store basement because it was too long to fit in the elevators.

In Dortmund, Germany, a Subway restaurant was built inside a former church. The building retains many original architectural features, including stained-glass windows, giving it a unique ambiance quite different from the typical Subway location.

A Taco Bell on a floating barge in Dubai provides a novel dining experience with views of the Dubai Fountain and the Burj Khalifa.

In Barcelona, a Dunkin' shop is located in one of the city's historic buildings, featuring traditional Catalan architectural elements, blending the old with the new in an unusual setting.

Near the Giza pyramid complex in Cairo, Egypt, there's a KFC location, along with other QSR chains, where visitors can enjoy modern fast food while gazing at the ancient pyramids.

A McDonald's in an airplane in Taupo, New Zealand, is known as the "McPlane." This McDonald's restaurant is housed inside a decommissioned DC-3 airplane, offering a novel dining experience with an intact cockpit for visitors to explore.

Starbucks adapted a centuries-old Japanese teahouse in Kyoto, Japan, preserving its traditional design elements, such as tatami mats and wooden décor, to offer a serene and culturally immersive coffee-drinking experience.

Never underestimate the ingenuity of franchisees worldwide! Where there is a will there is a way. ■

William (Bill) Edwards, CEO of Edwards Global Services (EGS), has five decades of helping more than 40 companies successfully expand their businesses to other countries. Having lived and worked in virtually every corner of the world and across 12 business sectors, he is uniquely qualified to steer senior executives successfully through the complexities of taking their businesses global. Download the EGS quarterly GlobalVue country ranking chart at <https://edwardsglobal.com/globalvue>. Subscribe to his biweekly global business update newsletter at <https://insider.edwardsglobal.com>. Contact him to discuss taking your franchise global at +1-949-375-1896 and bedwards@edwardsglobal.com.