

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Marriott makes moves in Middle East with UAE openings

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*The Ritz-Carlton Ras Al Khaimah, Al Hamra Beach opened earlier this year. Image credit: The Ritz-Carlton*

By STAFF REPORTS

Hospitality group Marriott International is eyeing expansion in the Middle East, with the planned opening of 11 hotels in the United Arab Emirates this year.

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Among the properties already opened in the country is the Ritz Carlton Ras Al Khaimah, Al Hamra Beach in Ras Al Khaimah, the brand's fifth hotel in the UAE. As Marriott adds to its existing presence in the Middle East, the group expects to have an 80-hotel-strong footprint in the UAE by the end of 2023.

"With a presence in the market that dates back over three decades, we have witnessed and been a part of the transformation of the UAE as one of the world's most dynamic travel destinations," said Alex Kyriakidis, president and managing director for the Middle East and Africa at Marriott International, in a statement.

"Our established and growing portfolio of hotels underscore the substantial demand for our brands in this market," he said. "We remain very optimistic about the UAE and continue to explore opportunities to further amplify our growth in the country through new deal signings and conversion opportunities."

### UAE additions

After opening six properties in the first nine months of 2018, Marriott has plans for five more debuts this year. The slated launches include W Dubai - The Palm, as well as W's takeover of Yas Island Hotel, which will be the brand's first hotel in Abu Dhabi.



*W Dubai - The Palm. Image credit: W Hotels*

2018 will see Marriott adding more than 2,600 rooms in the market.

Sixteen of Marriott's brands have a presence in the UAE, with half of the properties at the upper-upscale level. The luxury brands manage fifteen of the company's hotels in the region.

In the Middle East and Africa, Marriott operates three branded residences, including the Bulgari Residences in Dubai. By 2022, Marriott is planning to open five more residential properties, bringing its portfolio to eight.



*Bulgari Residences in Dubai. Image credit: Bulgari Residences Dubai*

"Our success in the Middle East stems from our long-established presence in the market and the value we deliver to our owner-partners," said Arne Sorenson, president and CEO of Marriott International, in a statement. "It is the trust owners have in Marriott International, combined with our differentiated brands and collective strength of our global platform, that has put us in a position to further expand our portfolio in the country and strengthen guest loyalty.

"We are privileged to have the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing growth and diversification of the UAE's economy and remain committed to supporting the direction of its visionary leaders to further enhance the tourism sector," he said.

While Italy and France are the most popular planned vacation spots for affluent Americans through the end of the year, locations in the Middle East and North Africa are seeing a surge in interest from tourists.

Based on data from its own bookings, high-end hospitality network Virtuoso shared the top travel destinations from September through the holiday season. Turkey, Egypt and Morocco are among the tourism spots that are seeing triple-digit growth in travel from Americans this year ([see story](#)).