

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Marriott added 29 luxury properties in 2018

January 22, 2019



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

By STAFF REPORTS

Hospitality group Marriott is planning to expand its global portfolio further after reaching a record 478,000 rooms in the pipeline by the end of 2018.

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During the year, Marriott signed management and franchise deals with 816 properties and opened 500 properties, closing the year with a total 6,900 properties. Twenty-nine of the added properties were luxury hotels, allowing Marriott to strengthen its position in upscale hospitality.

"Marriott's meaningful growth momentum across its portfolio of brands continued in 2018, as hotel owners increasingly turned to Marriott's world-class teams, leading business platforms, unmatched global scale and captivating brands," said Tony Capuano, executive vice president and global chief development officer at Marriott, in a statement. "With the world's largest pipeline of hotels, a growing loyalty base of 120 million members and a compelling value proposition to our partners, Marriott is positioned to fuel expansion further in 2019."

Making room for growth

Marriott today has 1.3 million rooms across 130 countries and territories.

Part of the group's expansion involved its six luxury brands, which added 6,200 rooms last year. Among the openings were The Ritz-Carlton, Shanghai Hongqiao; St. Regis, Dubai and a property in the Dominican Republic featuring a trio of branded resorts.

Marriott's now unified loyalty program saw higher luxury redemptions in 2018. The company also notes that more bookings came directly through its platforms.

In February, Marriott is rolling out a rebrand for its combined Marriott Rewards, the Ritz-Carlton Rewards and Starwood Preferred Guest loyalty programs, uniting them under the name Bonvoy ([see story](#)).

"Marriott's owners are benefiting from a growing base of affluent, global loyalty members seeking travel experiences of a lifetime in sought-after destinations," said Stephanie Linnartz, global chief commercial officer at Marriott International, in a statement. "Our loyalty members benefit in turn from an increasing number of Marriott properties around the globe, as our owners continue to develop exciting projects in gateway cities, resort areas and

locations where our customers aspire to travel."



St. Regis Melbourne is slated to open in 2022. Image credit: St. Regis

Last year, Marriott reached records for organic room signings in Europe, the Middle East and Africa and for hotel signings in Asia Pacific.

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.

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 expected to have an 80-hotel-strong footprint in the UAE by the end of 2023 ([see story](#)).

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