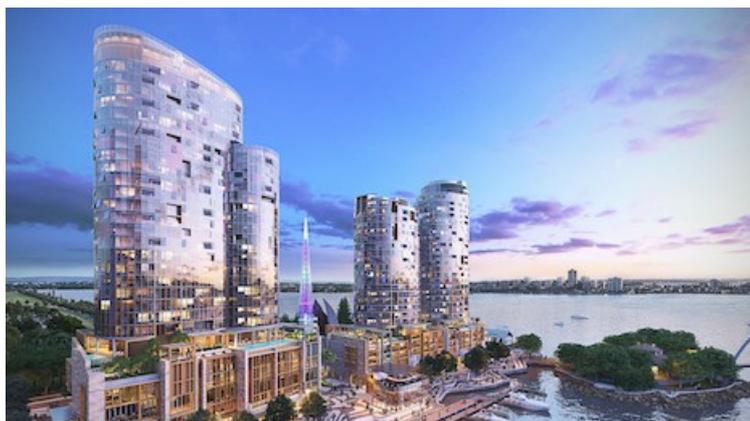


TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Marriott makes more moves into global luxury space

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The debut of The Ritz-Carlton, Perth marks the brand's re-entry into Australia. Image credit: Marriott International

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Hotel group Marriott International is continuing its investment in the luxury hospitality space with the development of more than 200 upscale properties, including locations under the Ritz-Carlton and St. Regis brands.

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Marriott's luxury portfolio, which includes eight high-end brands, is expected to have a presence in 20 new countries in the next five years. With each brand reflecting its own sensibilities across various destinations, Marriott hopes to continue attracting affluent travelers who are seeking more unique experiences.

"The world is undergoing one of the most significant economic transformations ever seen as more people than ever enter the ranks of the very wealthy and develop a taste for luxury," said Tina Edmundson, global brand officer and luxury portfolio leader at **Marriott International**, Washington D.C. "Globally, however, there is a fundamental shift taking place in luxury consumer values, a move towards experiences that bring happiness and well-being over luxury goods.

"The concept of luxury as a status symbol is being replaced by that of a status experience, which is great news for us as Marriott International plays an outsized role in luxury travel," she said.

Global growth

In 2018, 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 ([see story](#)).

The Ritz-Carlton is expanding its global presence with plans to open six new locations this year, including its 100th property.



The Ritz-Carlton Ras Al Khaimah, Al Hamra Beach opened in 2018. Image credit: The Ritz-Carlton

In addition to a new Chinese property in Xi'an, Ritz-Carlton is reentering the Australian market with a new location in Perth. A former Ritz-Carlton property in Sydney reopened under the InterContinental brand several years ago.

Two new Ritz-Carlton properties will also debut in capital cities: Mexico City, Mexico and Morocco's Ritz-Carlton Rabat, Dar es Salam. Renovations at the Ritz-Carlton's Central Park hotel are also expected to be completed this year.

St. Regis, which recently opened in the Chinese city of Zhuhai, is also building its footprint in Asia. The St. Regis Hong Kong, designed by Andr Fu, will open later this year.

Aside from Asia, the St. Regis Venice will soon join the brand's recently renovated Rome property in Italy. A location in Cairo, Egypt is also in development.



The Gritti Palace, a Luxury Collection Hotel in Venice. Image courtesy of Marriott International

The Luxury Collection, one of Marriott's independent groups, is also adding nine new properties this year. These additions will be in diverse locations, including Okinawa, Japan; Cesme, Turkey; Buckinghamshire, United Kingdom and Budapest, Hungary.

"All of our luxury brands provide a unique point of view, and we continue to be focused on carefully setting each brand apart by highlighting nuanced differences and leaning into specific brand touch points and product cues," Ms. Edmundson said. "Partnerships and programming is another element that helps our brands forge their identities."

Marriott developments

Marriott's eight luxury brands are part of largest in the hotel group in the world, following the acquisition of Starwood.

The group's newly revamped loyalty program Marriott Bonvoy covers 30 hotel brands, including what was once Marriott Rewards, the Ritz-Carlton Rewards and Starwood Preferred Guest. Loyalty programs are crucial for hospitality groups since they encourage customer retention and emphasize experiential travel, a growing trend among affluents.

Members will now be able to purchase or redeem points for unique experiences on a new digital platform, Marriott Bonvoy Moments ([see story](#)).

Marriott International is also planning to grow its branded residential portfolio, which includes Ritz-Carlton and St. Regis projects, as more high-end homebuyers seek to establish luxury lifestyles in mixed-use residences.

The hospitality brand has already opened almost 90 residential properties and has 60 additional projects already approved and expected to open in the next four years, a jump of 70 percent. While historically these branded residences are part of mixed-use developments that include a hotel of the same brand, Marriott is investing in more residential-only projects ([see story](#)).

"We know that our guests are seeking more meaning and personal significance in their experiences substance over flash and more than ever before, they are engaged and invested in their travel," Ms. Edmundson said. "My goal is that across all of our luxury properties, we are giving our guests what they need in order to feel inspired and as though their journey has impacted their perspective, values or beliefs."

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