

# W Hotel takes a foothold in Doha

The 445 room W Hotel Doha opened three months ago. WAEL RASHED, area director of sales and marketing, Gulf & Saudi Arabia, caught up with KIM THOMSON

## WHAT occupancy levels have you been experiencing so far?

Well we have had a lot of superstars in so far, so we were pretty lucky. We had the A/C Milan team and of course we opened in time for the Arab League summit. We are growing month after month, slowing building our base, and of course Qatar is growing. Qatar Investment Authority and Qatar Tourism Authority are doing a good job of diversifying the product range as well as diversifying the investments into Doha. It is not taking big jumps but gradually growing. And of course Doha is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and certainly the highest income in the world.

## W as a new brand in this market, how would you describe it?

W is an amazing brand and Doha is the first foothold for us in the Middle East. It's a lifestyle brand, its style design, its music, entertainment and everything in between. It is really a wonderful concept that meets the needs of the sophisticated business and leisure traveller. Its fun to work for, its fun to be in this environment - this is the feedback we get from our customers.

## What are the plans for the region for W?

We are planning on a couple of destinations. The next one to open should be the W in Amman, Jordan. There are plans for a lot of different cities, but definitely Dubai and Marrakech. Its one of the fastest growing brands, however, internationally, we started the W Brand 10 years ago, and now stand at 29 hotels.

## Bearing in mind the economic times, do you need to do something different to drive business?

Offer added value. The W is a "whatever, whenever concept" we tailor make everything for our clients and it is very important that they feel at home and that they are being taken care of.

## In terms of guest demographics, what are you finding?

We see an increase in the younger Arab market. They love it. The W is a destination in itself, it's a new trend of hotels, and it really building up a very good momentum. We get a good



Rashed



The W Hotel Doha features 445 spacious guest rooms

share from the Starwood preferred guest of course but we also getting the piece of other cake. We don't compete with other brands, we don't have similar another chain that provides this lifestyle except small independent hotels. I think when Armani, Versace or Bulgari come up they may compete with us.

## What are your feeder markets?

Mainly business and groups with a bit of leisure from GCC and international business travel coming from Europe, US and Asia. The food and beverage environment is great for the local community and the restaurants are all doing well. ■

# Joining hands at Saïdia, Morocco

WORLDHOTELS has signed a management agreement with Property Logic to create a luxury golf resort in Le Jardin de Fleur, Mediterranean Saïdia in Morocco.

This partnership will allow the resort to be known as the Worldhotels.Homes-Suites - Saïdia. It is scheduled to open in 2011.

The resort features 125 Moroccan poolside villas located around a golf course in Mediterranean Saïdia on the northern coast. All villas comprise three bedrooms with their own private pools and views of the golf course. There is a clubhouse, bar and restaurant on site, as well as an outdoor lagoon pool, an indoor pool, gym, tennis course, mini golf and an amphitheatre for entertainment and social events.

Mediterrania Saïdia, about 30 minutes from Oujda airport, has six kilometres of beaches, three 18 hole golf courses and a new marina for 1,300 berths.

Joop Huisman, managing director at Property Logic said, "We have chosen to partner with Worldhotels as we share a common vision for the success of the new destination of Mediterranean Saïdia. We believe that the Worldhotels brand is a perfect fit for Le Jardin de Fleur, as our mission is to offer a new concept in luxury tourism developments on the Mediterranean." ■

# Park Hyatt Jeddah now open



THE Park Hyatt Jeddah Marina Club and Spa opened last month, marking its entry into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Set among landscaped gardens on the Corniche of Jeddah, the new Hyatt is a five star hotel offering contemporary luxury, good service and views of the Red Sea and King Fahd fountain with its more than 312 metre high plume of water.

The hotel is in the heart of the city, within the Al Hamra District at the Equestrian Club of Jeddah, and minutes away from the central business district.

The 34.5 acre resort is an engineering feat, formed

from reclaimed prime waterfront land from the Red Sea. It will feature 10,000 sq m of spa and wellness facilities, the Lazurde Meetings & Events Centre, a yacht marina, as well as a variety of restaurants and lounges.

There are 142 guestrooms, including 15 suites, featuring exclusive home comforts combined with business and entertainment gadgetry. The bathrooms offer indulgences such as deep soaking baths and rain showers.

Opening soon is the Lazurde Meetings & Events Centre adjacent to Park Hyatt Jeddah. It is accessible by a dedicated entrance for total discretion and con-

venience, and will be ideal for wedding parties, product launches, corporate meetings and conferences for up to 800 guests. The 756 sq m ballroom can be divided into three separate spaces, and additionally, the exclusive Palm Courtyard is able to accommodate up to 900 guests for outdoor events by the Red Sea.

The central Lobby Lounge includes the Cigar Room, which will serve a variety of high quality cigars from around the world. Nafoura Restaurant offers Mediterranean cuisine and an additional four food and beverage outlets will open soon. ■

venience, and will be ideal for wedding parties, product launches, corporate meetings and conferences for up to 800 guests. The 756 sq m ballroom can be divided into three separate spaces, and additionally, the exclusive Palm Courtyard is able to accommodate up to 900 guests for outdoor events by the Red Sea.

The central Lobby Lounge includes the Cigar Room, which will serve a variety of high quality cigars from around the world. Nafoura Restaurant offers Mediterranean cuisine and an additional four food and beverage outlets will open soon. ■

# October soft opening for Australia's Wolgan Valley

By Cheryl Mandy

SCHEDULED for soft opening in October, Emirates Hotels & Resorts conservation based Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa in Australia's Great Dividing Range is gearing up to open all visitor gates come November 1.

The resort in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area occupies two per cent of a 4,000 acre conservancy reserve. Joost Heymeijer general manager of Wolgan Valley, who has been working with this project for the past four years, is "like a kid in a candy store" when asked if he is excited about its opening.

"I can smell the finish line - which in reality is the starting line too," Heymeijer told *TTN*. "I can't wait but I'm also enjoying this time at the moment."

He essentially wears two hats: that of hotel project manager as well as general manager. Staff recruitment has been a recent priority, most recruits coming from within Australia and speaking a variety of languages to suit the customer mix.

Initially Heymeijer was anticipating 70 per cent of the business to be international with 30 per cent domestic, but since the credit crunch he expects the domestic percentage to be higher in both the leisure and MICE markets.

Bookings soared after ITB in March and there are a "good number" of bookings from the UK for the Christmas season and into early 2010. While Australia offers



Picnics in the park one of the activities at Wolgan Valley

many attractions to the Middle East market, most prefer the lure of the Gold Coast for longer stays of three to four weeks.

However, "the pattern of travel from the Middle East to Australia is very promising - up 6 per cent every year," said Heymeijer. He believes the resort will attract the more discerning traveller that appreciates its many ecotourism aspects.

Wolgan Valley is surrounded by two National Parks. It features 40 individual villas surrounded by private decks, each having its own indoor/outdoor swimming pool, and a spa. Its architecture is reminiscent of a traditional rural Australian



Heymeijer

homestead.

As Emirates Hotels & Resorts' first hospitality development outside Dubai, the project was developed using similar principles of Al Maha Desert Resort & Spa. Most of the area is operated as a wildlife reserve, and the Wolgan conservancy project protects the region's indigenous and endangered species, which had previously been under pressure from introduced flora and feral predators, the major causes of species extinction in Australia.

Thousands of native trees have also been planted. Environmentally sustainable practices are an integral part of the Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa development. Rainwater collection, grey water recycling and the use of solar panels are incorporated into the architecture, and resort will ultimately have over 100 solar energy units. ■