

Hotel Business®

VOLUME 25 NO. 4 MARCH 7, 2016

HOTELBUSINESS.COM

Industry Giant

Jonathan Tisch's huge
impact on hospitality

Building by the Numbers
Annual construction
report & listing



Located in Switzerland, the Hotel Royal Savoy Lausanne, a Murwab hotel, is part of The Bürgenstock Selection. Katara Hospitality Switzerland AG manages the 196-room property.



Preferred Hotels & Resorts partners with Katara Hospitality

By Matthew Marin
Associate Editor

CHICAGO—Generating more than \$1 billion in reservations revenue on behalf of its member hotels worldwide, Preferred Hotels & Resorts, an independent hotel brand, recently posted its 2015 year-end results, indicating a 15% increase over the previous year. In March 2015, the Chicago-based company executed a comprehensive rebranding that marked the onset of its new consumer-focused strategy and welcomed 91 new properties across 35 countries to its global portfolio.

More recently, Preferred Hotels & Resorts achieved another milestone in its 48-year history with plans to expand its global presence in the Middle East. The company recently partnered with Katara Hospitality, a global hotel owner, developer and operator based in Lusail, Qatar, entering into a master partnership agreement for the recently launched Murwab Hotel Group, Katara Hospitality's standalone hotel operating division.

Murwab Hotel Group manages an international collection of boutique upscale properties under its three main areas of business: Murwab Hotels and The Bürgenstock Selection, as well as a collection of independent non-branded upscale properties. Four of Murwab Hotel Group's existing luxury

hotels in Qatar and Switzerland have been brought into representation of Preferred Hotels & Resorts, and five additional properties currently under development in Europe and the Middle East will join over the course of the next 18 months.

"The master partnership agreement between Preferred Hotels & Resorts and Katara Hospitality is in strong alignment with our vision and ethos, as Katara Hospitality aims to pursue synergies with hospitality brands that possess renowned equity while sharing its core values in luxury service provision and property design aesthetic," said Hamad Abdulla Al-Mulla, CEO of Katara Hospitality.

Over the past several years, Preferred Hotels & Resorts had been monitoring Katara Hospitality's expansion throughout the Middle East. Following a series of negotiations, Preferred Hotels & Resorts met with Katara Hospitality during last year's Arabian Travel Market, a travel industry exposition for the Middle East, and presented plans for the partnership. Katara Hospitality recognized Preferred Hotels & Resorts' output in key markets and selected the company to support its operating arm.

"Katara Hospitality is very selective in who it engages with," said Saurabh Rai, EVP, South Asia, Middle East, Africa and Australasia, Preferred Hotels

continued on page 60

Preferred Hotels

continued from page 10

& Resorts. “The company is new to the operating space. It wanted to make sure that it was partnering with the right player for independent hotel representation. There was a very thorough evaluation process from its CEO, COO and chief legal counsel.”

Designed to support Murwab Hotel Group’s strategic vision for expansion following its March 2015 launch, the move allows the company’s properties to tap into Preferred Hotels & Resorts’ sales capabilities in the corporate and leisure travel sectors, expertise in the independent and small hotel collection space, marketing and distribution platforms, and network of sales professionals located in 40 offices worldwide. In turn, the alliance allows Preferred Hotels & Resorts to establish first-time presence in Qatar and greater brand awareness in other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

“As a leading hotel owner, developer and operator based in Qatar, Katara Hospitality has, through leveraging, more than 45 years of experience, encountered tremendous success as it expands its footprint beyond Qatar’s borders into key travel markets across the world,” said Al-Mulla. “This success has, in part, been through strategic partnerships with some of the world’s finest luxury hospitality brands, as we aim to grow an enviable collection of iconic luxury properties across the world.”

Immediate Murwab Hotel Group additions to the Preferred Hotels & Resorts portfolio include Saraya Corniche Hotel (Doha, Qatar), Sealine Beach Resort (Mesaieed, Qatar), Simaisma, A Murwab Resort (Doha) and Hotel Royal Savoy Lausanne (Switzerland). Five properties across Qatar and Switzerland that are scheduled to open this year through 2017 will also join the brand portfolio.

“Katara Hospitality is deeply rooted in Qatar,” said Rai. “It has a strong advantage of being an operator and a hotel owner. It was able to develop a strong pipeline with the Murwab Hotel Group portfolio right from the get-go. It has also been able to demonstrate strong pre-opening capabilities like technical and project management, business planning and F&B conceptualization. It’s been able to develop these capabilities extremely well.”



Owned by Katara Hospitality and managed by Murwab Hotels, Sealine Beach Resort is located in the southern part of Qatar in the city of Mesaieed.

Murwab Hotel Group plans to expand in Europe, one of Katara Hospitality’s key markets. “With this in mind, a strategic partnership with Preferred Hotels & Resorts creates opportunities for Katara Hospitality and the Murwab Hotel Group to leverage from unparalleled sales competences in both corporate and leisure travel segments,” said Al-Mulla. “The partnership was mutually beneficial in that it also created an opportunity for Preferred Hotels & Resorts to attain representation in Qatar and Switzerland through four of Murwab Hotel Group’s existing luxury hotels in these destinations.”

Preferred Hotels & Resorts represents more than 650 distinctive hotels, resorts, residences and hotel groups across 85 countries. The company offers five global collections, which include Legend, LVX, Lifestyle, Connect and Preferred Residences. Launched in August 2013, the iPrefer guest loyalty program is a points-based consumer loyalty program that rewards travelers with points on qualifying hotel stays. Points can be exchanged for reward certificates redeemable like cash toward expenditures at hundreds of participating properties across the company’s brand portfolio.

“Murwab Hotel Group is a strong name within the hospitality sphere in the Middle East,” said Rai. “Beyond the Middle East, it has few hotels owned in Europe. Partnering with Preferred Hotels & Resorts gives the group global representation into key feeder markets and business segments in North America and Europe.” **HB**