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Marloes Knippenberg

CEO, Kerten Hospitality



Tell us about Kerten's biggest projects in the Kingdom at the moment. What's in the pipeline?

KSA has been the launchpad for Kerten Hospitality in the Middle East, and with an investment license, we're dedicated to bringing our unique mixed-use approach to the market through concepts that combine innovative spaces for working, living and socialising to create lifestyle destinations.

Our first project – Ouspace Madinah Road – opened in Jeddah earlier this year and is a modern workspace and business club offering tailor-made office spaces for short and long-term let, enabling entrepreneurs and businesses to work flexibly and collaboratively.

Our second Ouspace in Saudi Arabia, part of our first mixed-use project in the Kingdom, perfectly showcases this approach. Part of the upcoming 114-key The House Hotel Jeddah – also operated by Kerten Hospitality – we have replaced the classical meeting floor with a level dedicated to a mix of business and leisure ('bleisure').

Part of the Design Hotels collection, The House Hotel is a luxury hospitality concept with a reputation for quality and

individuality. The House Hotel Jeddah will be the focal point of the prestigious City Yard development in the upmarket Al Rawdah district, a lifestyle destination that will showcase our expertise in creating innovative mixed-use spaces.

Accentuating our commitment to the Kingdom, we have recently welcomed Mishary Alhajery as Country Director for KSA. He will be spearheading our ambitious plans for expansion through our growing portfolio of brands, which also includes the mid-market lifestyle concept Cloud7, designed for the next-generation guest who appreciates a seamless travel experience and seeks inspiration from the locality and culture.

What were some of the most important initiatives in the fields of tourism, hospitality and F&B – and how have they helped you penetrate the market? Why mixed-use properties, and what makes them suitable for the Saudi market?

As work and lifestyle cultures drastically evolve, the lines between living, working and travelling have blurred. This has resulted in a shift in what guests are looking for from a hotel experience, with increasing demand for developments that

meet the needs of the local community as well as visitors.

Kerten Hospitality has applied its hospitality know-how to identify an addressable niche in the Kingdom and help create destinations which meet demand for more engaging environments. The resulting environment is stylish and stimulating, with different spaces integrated with curated amenities to enable guests to create, network or retreat.

How different is the Saudi market from that of other countries in the GCC and beyond?

As the largest economy in the Middle East and North Africa, and with GDP forecasted to grow by 2% this year, Saudi Arabia is an increasingly attractive base for multinationals, small businesses and start-ups seeking to do business in the region.

Since the announcement of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, progressive reforms are significantly encouraging tourism, such as through the latest visa announcement. This provides significant opportunities for operators and owners to introduce innovative hospitality concepts to this dynamic market.

How has the response been so far in Saudi?

The response so far has been fantastic. Ouspace Madinah Road has fast become a community hub, bringing people together through a variety of events and experiences that tap into their social and business needs, from laughter yoga through to tech talks with industry leaders.

From a management perspective, we're excited to be collaborating with knowledgeable hotel owners who align with our objectives in order to deliver value to the whole ecosystem. They see what we've achieved, want to be part of this revolution and choose to work with an operator who has created a flexible business model.