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Cloud.7 launches with first property in Istanbul

Nikhil Pereira, February 9th, 2016

Cloud.7 recently announced its first property in Istanbul, in turn launching a new hotel brand, that's set to open its doors and welcome its first guest this February.

Marloes Knippenberg, CEO for Cloud.7 Hotels, told *Hotelier Middle East* exclusively: "We are launching a new hotel management company and concept for the curious and connected travellers of today. Starting a hotel brand for the 'millennial at heart', it's not only important we did something new, but we've also worked hard to develop Cloud.7's brand pillars that would appeal to and evolve with the changing needs of travellers."



Knippenberg, who previously worked with Hilton in Dubai, is not isolating its feeder source by targeting millennial travellers alone, but to anyone who feels young and seeks a different experience. "We're on a mission to delight both the introvert and extrovert, bringing together comfortable clouds – the rooms - with Cloud.7's social and sharing spaces and the latest technology."

Knippenberg said the journey from concept to fruition has been a rather short one, with work having started in September 2015, with the first hotel set to open this month. "Thankfully, it's been a very positive and dynamic journey so far with a real confidence around our portfolio in terms of investor and media interest, backed by several new management property deals already in the pipeline. After launching our first hotel, our primary focus in the coming months is to reach out to property owners and investors in our target cities to pursue our goal of establishing 15 properties."

The management have given themselves 24 months to open these new hotels, which will be located across Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Middle East targeting the mid-market segment.

Knippenberg gave us a deeper insight on the challenges the company faced while defining its philosophy: "One of our more entertaining challenges was developing the technological aspects of our Cloud.7 hotels and we're pleased to say we managed to put some of our core features in place, which includes offering guests online check-in and out, in-room 'handy' mobiles, 24-hour access to the Cloud.7 hospitality team via social media and our 'Meet the Locals' feature - that allows guests to connect, meet and mingle both on and off-line with like-minded locals in the city," Knippenberg said.

She told *Hotelier Middle East* that Istanbul was the city of choice for its first property due to its strategic location. "With one foot in the East and the other in the West, Istanbul draws a large number of young travellers from all over the world - and very much felt like the right place to launch our first Cloud.7; at the centre of our vision to expand across Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Middle East.

The owning company, Kerten, is a majority shareholder of Turkey's hugely successful - The House Hotel Collection, which is also known to foster the growth of mid-sized and start-up companies in Europe, Turkey, the Middle East and Africa.

"In 2014, Istanbul welcomed 11.8 million international visitors. Despite its popularity as a travel destination, the majority of its hotel growth in the last decade has been in luxury four- and five-star properties, with very little in the affordable, upscale and independent hotel offering for the new, fast-moving and tech-savvy global traveller," she said.

Currently, the percentage of mid-market hotels as compared to the upscale and upper upscale hotels in Dubai is not that high. Watch this space as we delve into the company's plans for the UAE and wider Middle East market.

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