



HBA London Weaves Arabic Heritage with Luxurious Artistry at the Waldorf Astoria Ras Al Khaimah

(London, 28 January 2014) HBA London has crafted an interior design concept for the Waldorf Astoria Ras Al Khaimah that immerses guests in an ambience woven from the ancient history, tradition and culture of the UAE. Envisioned as an escape from the windswept sand dunes to the tranquil waters of the Arabian Sea, the luminous spaces of the region's first Waldorf Astoria evoke calm and serenity.



The lobby's design and palette are derived from the centuries-old practice of pearl diving in the islands' sparkling waters. Behind the reception desks, framed wall panels recall the colours of the sea; covered in turquoise silk, they have been meticulously hand-stitched with gold sequins in a flowing wave pattern. In the centre of the lobby lies the "pearl" of the hotel, an iconic clock based upon the ancient astrolabe which was used to discern the precise times for prayer in the Islamic faith. Over six metres tall and modelled after a compass, the timepiece has five rotating gilded rings around its base that show the exact minute of each prayer throughout the day. Three tonnes of metal, steel and champagne gold

were used in making the clock, requiring goldsmiths to mill further quantities of champagne gold as the amount required exhausted the existing UK supply. Engraved in Arabic and English around its circumference is a cherished phrase extracted from a traditional Bedouin poem, "From your homeland travel abroad to find glory". The pearlised glass dome on each of the clock's four faces is decorated with gold plated hands which sweep around a turquoise centrepiece. As the largest of its kind in the world, the clock will be an attraction for visitors in its own right.

The lobby has bespoke artwork conjuring up the underwater world of divers. British artist Ann Carrington has created four pieces expressly for the hotel, works made entirely from mother-of-pearl buttons that have been sewn in the pattern of fan coral onto taupe silk. Further along the ground level is a calligraphy collection in Kufic, the earliest form of Arabic script that was used to write the first copies of the Qur'an.



Flowing from the lobby is *Peacock Alley*, a signature lounge found in all Waldorf Astoria hotels. Here, the design mixes local touches with contemporary style inspired by the brand's New York City flagship. A ring of banquettes encircle a tiered marble fountain and a spectacular chandelier with handcrafted glass elements suggests stylised peacock feathers. Intricate geometric paper sculptures formed from barley straw with flax fibres and gold leaf have been especially commissioned from artist Gill Wilson.



At *Camelia*, soft shades of amethyst and green paint a fresh, contemporary twist on traditional Middle Eastern tea and shisha lounges. Designed to be a luminous and spacious place especially attractive for women to comfortably relax, its delicate, feminine style has been modelled after dainty Arabic pastries. Exquisite beaded curtains offer glimpses of the seaside to create a soothing connection with nature.



The handsome *Lexington Grill* is based upon the concept of American steakhouses. Strong textures and dynamic materials help convey the masculine atmosphere of a classic New York restaurant: deep Carnelian red marble flooring with white veining alludes to the meaty cuisine on offer; table tops have been inset with hammered copper, and banquettes have been upholstered with burgundy and cream leather embossed with a crocodile hide pattern. Contemporary art adds to the moody vibe; sculptures created from copper woven with synthetic horse hair interpret age-old materials in a new way. A collection of very detailed, high-contrast black and white images of musical instruments were commissioned from photographer Peter Defty to reinforce the space's association with the sophisticated jazz scene of New York City.



Qasr al Bahar offers guests dining in a cool, light-filled setting. The fresh and airy pale mint hued décor borrows from the gardens which surround the restaurant's outdoor terraces, and on the wall behind the buffet counter, green and white mosaic tiles introduce a crisp contrast to the vibrant fruit displays.



With private nooks that can be enclosed for more intimate dining experiences, *Marjan* has an exclusive panache influenced by ancient Islamic patterns and designs. The juxtaposition between the traditional and the contemporary is emphasised by furnishings that blend function with artistry, for example a locally crafted chandelier made from bronze spheres in varying sizes. Balcony seating on the upper levels looks onto the idyllic panorama of the coastline. Striking contemporary artwork by artist SasanNasernia depicts abstracted Arabic calligraphy.



With 360° views of the Ras Al Khaimah skyline from the 17th floor, the glamorous evening venue *17Squares* the destination for sophisticated nightlife. Fittingly, the décor is draped in “effortless” opulence, with swathes of crystals that swing languidly from the chandeliers, plush leather seating and delicate golden touches inspired by Champagne.



The pool area’s restaurant *Azure* is a more relaxed affair. Woven wicker chairs and pendant lights, pale timber surfaces and tropical foliage create a casual vibe. With its two-toned copper façade and tawny granite countertop, the family pool bar is sundowner central with lounge chairs that overlook the shoreline to form the perfect chill-out spot. At the infinity pool, the black and white finishes of the bar Al Fayrouz give it a more modern, Art Deco-inspired feel.



The sumptuous spa has been imagined by HBA London to capture the essence of floating underwater. This peaceful serenity is felt throughout the spa journey, intended to enliven the senses whilst instilling deep levels of wellbeing. Using rounded shapes and a sinuous spatial flow to immediately relax the body, the reception and retail spaces establish a dramatic sense of arrival. Typical treatment rooms play with light and shadow to create a warm, inviting mood; backlit curved covered ceilings emit a gentle glow, and soft sheers filter the illumination from the private outdoor garden with its bubbling water feature. The VIP treatment room is the ultimate in pampering with a luxurious sunken hot tub for couples, individual vanity counters and a large sofa for reclining. Overhead, a backlit, floating cascade of organically shaped “bubbles” creates the sensation of looking upwards from under the tranquil waters.



Deluxe Guestroom

The hotel's Classic and Deluxe bedrooms, as well as the suites, continue the concept of being a waterside oasis in the desert. Neutral textiles set a soothing tone, punctuated by splashes of turquoise such as the scrolled lines of the wool carpet and the swirled, handmade solid glass spheres which sit atop the timber headboards. Individually carved by woodworkers, these have been custom-designed by HBA London to have a circular pattern inspired by traditional Islamic motifs.



Imperial Suite

The six varieties of suites, Junior; One-Bedroom; Tower; Grand; Imperial; and Royal, all have been designed to provide exclusive guests with the utmost in privacy. Lavish finishes abound; a grand white marble staircase with a dramatic black balustrade evokes a sense of glamour; in the bedrooms, bespoke headboards are adorned with mother-of-pearl inlays; and contemporary art mixes with traditional Islamic detailing. Located on the hotel's uppermost levels, each suite enjoys spectacular views from its private balconies.



Porte Cochère



Peacock Alley Details



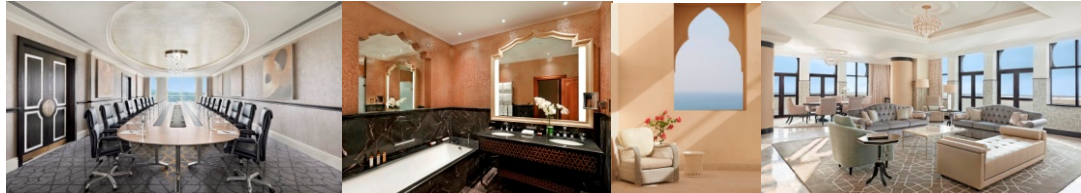
17Squared



Cigar Bar

Qasr al Bahar

Business Centre



Luuli Meeting Room Guest Bathroom Imperial Suite Royal Suite

About HBA London

HBA London creates inspired, brand-defining hospitality design experiences that are a fusion of tradition and innovation, craft and cutting-edge. Blending incomparable industry experience with a passion for artistic exploration, the team develops strong aesthetic identities that set new standards for luxury and comfort around the globe. The studio also encompasses The Gallery which offers an exceptionally high-concept design approach for individual owners of hotels, residences, restaurants & clubs and private yachts.

Current and recent projects by HBA London / The Gallery include: The AlpinaGstaad, Switzerland; Il LagodeiCigni restaurant, St. Petersburg; the spa and restaurant at Raffles Istanbul Zorlu Center; Mena House Oberoi in Cairo; The Palm House Resort and Spa, Palm Beach, Florida; Hotel Alfonso XIII, a Luxury Collection Hotel in Seville and Hotel Maria Cristina, a Luxury Collection Hotel in San Sebastian, Spain; the Couture Suite at the St. Regis Rome; Omkar 1973 Worli, Mumbai; the Royal Suite at the InterContinental London Park Lane; Hilton Schiphol, Amsterdam; La Stejarii, Bucharest, Romania; Kempinski Minsk; Sea Hotel, Bat Yam, Israel; Conrad Cairo; Westin Florence; ESPA at the Istanbul EDITION and the Ritz-Carlton ESPA, Hong Kong; and the Ritz-Carlton Tunis, Tunisia.

For more information about this design statement and hi-res images, please contact:

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