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PROJECT REPORT



First time: The Gourmet House store-cum-cafe

Arabic tradition, European feel

Cultural roots on show in Doha

Boasting what are thought to be some of the world's largest duplex hotel suites in the shape of its 1,062-sq-m Premier Duplex Sky Villas, complete with Jacuzzis in the clouds on the 61st and 62nd floors, the Kempinski Residences & Suites Doha has set out to make a name for itself among the cream of society in Qatar and the wider Gulf as the lifestyle living address.

The newest, and tallest, addition to the Doha skyline had its official opening in June last year marking a first for both Qatar and Kempinski as the company's first stand-alone residence and suites project in the Middle East and Africa and also the only one to operate as both residences and hotel in a single building.

The interiors were created by Italian architect and designer Giampiero Peia who said: "The brief was mainly from Omar Alfardan and Alfardan Properties with whom we have worked for many years on projects such as the Oyster Pavilion on the Pearl, the Alfardan Towers and SPA Chakra. So the idea was simply to apply our advanced design and coordination expertise - I don't talk of our 'usual style' because we love to change all the time - to create a clean, balanced and elegant approach between contemporary and classic, avoiding typical compromise."

He continued that the key was in reinterpreting the amazing and complex Arab architectural culture with contemporary design incorporating new technologies such as lattice, laser cutting and water jet patterns for inlaid marble flooring and wall and mashrabiya grids.

The unabashed luxury of the black and white foyer with its high-end marble flooring, white leather seating and mashrabiya screen décor gives the feeling of contemporary modernity coupled with unmistakable Arabic style, a theme which is carried through in the 370 spacious suites and the sky villas which



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take up the top five floors of the 62-storey property.

The one, two and three-bedroom suites have been designed for gracious living and all feature top quality fixtures and fittings with hand-picked furniture chosen for both comfort and style to fit in with the bright, airy feel throughout.

Overlooking either the cityscape or the iconic Pearl Island the Deluxe Triplex Sky Villas, laid out over the 58th to 60th floors, measure 596 sq m and feature four king-size bedrooms with walk-in wardrobes and luxurious en-suite facilities including both shower and bath.

There are



spacious family living rooms, with plasma-screen TVs on both ground and second floors, as well as generous, fully-equipped kitchens, laundry rooms, maid's quarters and private suite elevators.

The Superior Triplex Sky Villas measure 476 sq m and are similarly luxuriously equipped while the jewels in the crown are the Premier Duplex Sky Villas with their six huge bedrooms and panoramic views over the calm Gulf waters.

Each floor has a bright, airy master bedroom with Jacuzzi situated in front of floor-to-ceiling windows to take advantage of the spectacular views.

Peia added: "To fit with the design shape we used a mix of modern and industrial material for example, to reduce thickness, loading and maintenance, we used a new generation of large porcelain tiles, with pattern that imitates marble as never before.

"In fact though, my preferred material is the light. So we worked a lot with LED indirect or direct new lighting systems. And of course the rest is the ever-green classic materials such as dark leather and wenge wood for loose furniture, new white Corian for bathrooms and kitchens, a lot of decorated glass panels, stucco, golden leaves for finishing etc. But the secret is always the design and how to use these 'normal' materials."

Kempinski Doha is also home to a first of its kind for the city, the Gourmet House, a store-cum-café in the traditional European style offering which has been decorated to resemble a traditional European delicatessen with cheeses and cold-cuts prominently displayed alongside designer olive oils, vinegars and sauces.

But while incorporating European design elements Peia insists his intention was always to give this iconic property a very Arabic sense of place for future generations.



Rooted: Clockwise from above; exterior, the lobby, Gourmet House, lounge dining and Aroma restaurant

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He explained: "My goal for this part of the world is showing to the young generations, and convincing the old ones, that the main values are in the roots, that the scope of an architect is make real the dream of a recognisable link between the past and the future. If you are not able to provide a contemporary vision of the roots you can lose them forever. So the boring international 'free style' or fake vernacular or fake minimalism of the globalisation can win over in people's minds forever. And this is the nightmare I fight in any project."

As with all Kempinski projects, the aim was always to create a home from home with that little bit extra and Peia feels he has achieved this saying: "We were seeking a cozy and relaxing ambience for family and business travellers, where the guest feels himself home. But this cannot be true 100 per cent otherwise why leave the home?"



"The guest finds in this 'vertical town' all the facilities that he cannot have at home and it is important to match the cozy mood with unique and fresh design, surprising in some way the visitor. But the surprise must be appropriate and elegant, always."

A Kempinski spokesman added: "Rather than incorporating only contemporary sleek touches both Peia and Ibrahim Jeidah, who managed the architecture of the project, made sure to give Doha's tallest building a Qatari feel. From classic Arabic woven screens that feature Peia's original laser-cut design to white lines flanked by traditional Middle-Eastern rugs, the Kempinski is a table of two cultures.

"Guests are invited with sleek touches and crisp lines making them feel at home even when they're miles away from it.

"Peia wanted to keep frills to a minimum giving each suite a fresh feeling through light colours and his very own use of 'greige', a combination of grey and beige.

"When referring to the simplicity of the design he merely quoted fellow Italian Giorgio Armani 'Why is the room so simple? Because the richness must be discovered in other things, such as the detail'.

"There is Arabic calligraphy carved in the hollow poles in the lobby and Arabic typographic designs displayed on the walls of the lobby. This gives you the cultural warmth of the Arabian Gulf in a contemporary European-designed entrance."

Peia is currently working on three beach villas and a private island project, also in Doha.

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