

Branding Vietnam's luxury tourism

General manager of InterContinental Nha Trang **Phillip Beriman** talks with **Nhat Ha** about the importance of impressive design and service enhancements in branding luxury hospitality.



As a major foreign investor in Vietnam, what have you done to attract more high-end travellers to Vietnam as well as to place the country on the world luxury tourism map?

IHG® (InterContinental Hotels Group) is a global organisation with a broad portfolio of 15 well-known hotel brands. The fast-growing luxury segment is a really exciting space and we have made excellent progress in ensuring we have a wider offering for guests.

Hot on the heels of adding Regent Hotels & Resorts last year, we've elevated Kimpton into the luxury space, opened our 200th InterContinental with Shanghai Wonderland - one of the most talked about hotels of 2018, and recently we were excited to welcome Six Senses - a leading operator of top-tier luxury hotels, resorts

and spas with a truly world-renowned reputation for wellness and sustainability - to the IHG family.

Demand for our established brands is being boosted by impressive design and service enhancements, we're growing newer ones at a rapid rate, and, as this announcement shows, we're serious about taking advantage of exciting new opportunities too, especially in Vietnam.

What is your target market and do you have any campaigns in place to promote Vietnam's tourism to become one of the most attractive destinations for high end tourists in the world market in 2019?

At IHG we believe international travel should always be alluring. We are dedicated to those who appreciate and enjoy The InterContinental Life - the glamour and exhilaration of fascinating places, mixed with our international know-how and local cultural wisdom.

As you may know, The National Tourism Year 2019 will take place in Nha Trang city, Khanh Hoa coastal province, under the theme 'Colour of the Sea'. Thus, we keep associating with and supporting Khanh Hoa Tourism Board in these sea festival activities.

In order to promote and highlight Nha Trang's beautiful natural beaches with golden sand and emerald waters bathed in sunshine for over 300 days a year, in 2019 we are focusing on the

mix of business and leisure travellers. We aim to be 'Your Next MICE Destination' and the No.1 trusted luxury brand in the region. We have planned to organise media trips and fam trips to elevate the luxury positioning of the InterContinental brand as well as build up Nha Trang - Khanh Hoa as the most attractive destination for high end tourists.

How can you evaluate the importance of traditional inheritances and exploits in designing tourism products and tourism properties?

Traditional inheritances play an important role in a destination's attractiveness and they are one of the motivating and inspiring factors that impact a tourist's decision, urging them to choose a certain destination where they believe they can have treasured memories and experience local charms during their visit. This is not only a positive site for local social and economic development but also for a destination's core products, niche services and qualified resources.

'In The Know' is our brand idea and InterContinental is the only hotel brand that goes out of its way to share its knowledge with our guests and our dedicated 'in the know' concierge team will tailor an experience to each guest's requirements. Our guests will discover more about the world as we share with them what makes the local culture we're located within unique.

In Khanh Hoa - Nha Trang there are a number of well-known traditional inheritances, such as Ponaga Temple, Long Son Pagoda, Khanh Hoa Salangane Nest, Agarwood Craft Village, Dien Khanh Ancient Town and Hon Chong Promontory. Our con-

cierge team are happy to share their knowledge and tailor tours to your requirements whilst hoping to incorporate a few secrets to make your time with us truly unique.

We also offer our interesting 'Bed-Time Stories' about Vietnam's folktales as well as Nha Trang's hidden charms to cater to our younger guests.

Which of your Vietnamese legacy architectural details and services should guests not miss at your hotel?

The hotel was designed around The Five Basic Elements (Fire, Earth, Metal, Water and Wood) of the ancient art of Feng Shui to create an atmosphere of peace and tranquility as well as bring prosperity and good health. They are represented throughout the hotel. Typically, the yellow light represents FIRE, the color and texture of carpet presents EARTH, the metal table represents METAL, the reflection of the glass table to the ceiling represents WATER, and the wooden wall represents WOOD.

The hotel design concept is inspired by the idea of the old Nha Trang as a fishing village. The check-in counter is shaped as sailing boats and the reception backdrop is the motif of a fishing net. Furniture, artworks and decoration items that are displayed in the lobby are shaped as different types of traditional boats, such as basket boats or wooden boats amongst others, and floor to ceiling glass window offer stunning views of Nha Trang Bay.

The meeting rooms are named after the five old capital cities of the Cham Kingdom which Nha Trang used to be a part of. These are Kandapur, Simha, Vira, Indra and Bal Canar. These spacious meeting rooms are all flooded with natural light, ensuring that even the most seasoned planner will feel inspired.

We are the only ones in Nha Trang that provide 'Les Clefs d'Or' experienced concierges whom have their own mystique, a combination of their expertise sources of inside information, intelligence and communication, recognised by the golden keys

they display on the lapels of their uniforms.

Our guests can enjoy a spectacular ocean view from sunrise to sunset from all our restaurants and bars while tasting Nha Trang's seafood at Cookbook Cafe, sipping the unique flavour of 'Ca Phe Sua Da' at the Lobby Lounge or drinking fresh tropical juices at Aqualine Pool Bar. If guests have the chance, they should visit Spa InterContinental for some must-try treatments such as "Bamboo Oriental Massage", Vietnamese Massage or "Luxury Nha Trang Mud Wrap" for de-toxification and rejuvenation.