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Ritz-Carlton set for grand opening in Jan

MARRIOTT International Inc has a reason to celebrate when US-based Ritz-Carlton Hotel Co LLC pops the champagne bottles on December 1 this year for the opening of the Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur Hotel.

For the first time in Marriott's history, all four of its hotel chains are operating in one city.

Besides the Ritz-Carlton, the other chains under Marriott are the JW Marriott hotel located at Jalan Bukit Bintang, Renaissance and New World, both of which are at Jalan Ampang).

The Ritz-Carlton is located at Jalan Imbi.

In fact, the 248-room Ritz Carlton is said to be Malaysia's first luxury boutique hotel.

"We are going to create a different experience ... a departure from the rest of the luxury hotels in Kuala Lumpur," its general manager, Mr James W. McBride, said.

"This will be achieved based on the feeling one gets when entering the hotel, the ambience and the intimacy of the hotel," he added.

"The size of the hotel also helps as it will be like entering a mansion or home because it is decorated in such a way that one will feel its warmth," he said at a media briefing in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Construction work on the hotel is about 80 per cent completed to date.

Like the other Ritz-Carlton hotels worldwide, McBride said Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur will be focusing on the top 5 per cent of the global luxury travel market as its clientele.

"We are targeting an occupancy level similar if not better than that of other hotels in Kuala Lumpur which are also looking to capture the top 5 per cent of the travel market.

"When somebody leaves our hotel, what they take with them is their memory and that memory is only created by service alone and not the beauty of the hotel.

"Our goal is to be the best boutique hotel in Kuala Lumpur," he said.

McBride said the design of Kuala Lumpur's Ritz-Carlton building is different from that of the Ritz-Carlton hotels located in other countries.

"But what pools us all together is our shared philosophy which is the 'ingredient' to our success," he said.

Ritz-Carlton's philosophy centres on the company's motto, "We are Ladies and Gentlemen serving Ladies and Gentlemen", "The Credo" and the "Three Steps of Service".

"We are still working on our room rates at this time and we will be doing an official release next month," he said.

Since Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur's 400 sq m ballroom, meeting rooms and banquet areas will only be completed in December next year, McBride said the hotel will initially focus on developing relationships with its clientele.

"Once completed, our existing clientele will be able to propel us into filling the ballroom and meeting space," he said.

In the meantime, McBride said, the hotel will start marketing the ballroom, meeting space and rooms in two months "so that we can generate as much revenue as possible".

McBride said Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur is expected to have its grand launch in January next year.

"We are still conceptualising the event, but there is a good possibility

that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will grace the hotel then."

Meanwhile, Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur director of sales and marketing, Mr Jeffrey Jones, said its primary customer will be the corporate individual travellers.

"Eighty per cent of our hotel guests will come from this segment and the remaining 20 per cent comprise leisure travellers,"he said.

"Our corporate individual travellers will most likely be from the Asia-Pacific region, including Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea, the Philippines and Indonesia," Jones added.

Jones envisaged that the industries that its corporate guests will most likely come from are banking, information technology, petroleum, construction, manufacturing, retail and pharmaceutical.

Jones said the hotel's optimism also extends to the Commonwealth Games and the Multimedia Super Corridor.

In 1995, Marriott International bought a 49 per cent stake in Ritz-Carlton, with plans to take over the entire company.

The remaining 51 per cent meantime is held by Ritz-Carlton Hotel Co.

"Today, we manage 30 hotels worldwide and the Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur will be our number 31," McBride said.

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