

Malkai makes lifestyle statement

Pankaj Khimji has a remarkable vision: to create an exclusive luxury residential and resort complex, The Malkai, which will be unique in Oman – or indeed the Gulf – and an extremely attractive and very special hideaway for those looking for the peace and serenity that the Sultanate offers.

Located in Barka, just a short distance from Muscat's Seeb Airport, on a plot of land secured by Khimji under the government's initiative to develop responsible tourism and property development in the Sultanate, The Malkai will comprise a country club and residences that will compare and compete with some of the finest around the world. The Malkai is making a statement both in terms of lifestyle and in architecture. But of course, Khimji is no novice in developing superb resorts, having already created The Chedi, one of Muscat's jewels in hospitality.

Being developed by Al Maeen Real Estate Services at a cost of \$250 million and scheduled

for completion by the year 2010, The Malkai will comprise 101 four-bedroom villas and 92 two-bedroom suites which will be offered for sale; a boutique hotel offering just 41 luxury suites; and a luxury spa designed as a vast, walled water garden, featuring special floating treatment pavilions for total relaxation.

The master plan and lead design has been carried out by AW2 from Paris, an internationally acclaimed designer. Jaya and Associates are responsible for the interior design of all the villas and suites, which will be fully furnished for sale. Each property will be beautifully landscaped and also feature large swimming pools and only 10 per cent of the 206 acres of the development will be built up, giving a fabulous feel of space which will be so attractive for city-dwellers who wish to invest in, or just visit, the property.

There are further exclusive advantages to owners and guests: there will be the attraction of

The Malkai is Khimji's vision of an exclusive luxury residential and resort complex.



a nine-hole golf course designed by Gary Player, the legendary winner of multiple Majors.

"Gary is fantastic," says Khimji. "When he visited us as we were doing the first designs for the golf course and he viewed the site, he changed his entire design to fit with the existing landscape. He is so in tune with nature, so skilled and so emphatic about the environment."

Khimji is similarly passionate about preserving the ecology and environment of his homeland and so the project's design has been carefully arranged to avert damage to the existing flora and fauna in the surrounding area as well as on the property itself. Apart from the date palms, the property has a wonderful selection of indigenous trees, including the remarkable Omani mango trees.

Going further – and this is a testament to the man's selflessness – a desalination plant will be built to serve the development in order to preserve the area's natural water resources but it will also be built with a capacity well beyond the Malkai's needs in order to offer fresh water and ice to the local community and its fishing fleet.

"The surrounding area is full of date plantations which are the primary source of income for the farmers. If we were to drill wells we would starve them of natural water and starve them of their livelihood," says Khimji.

In addition to the golf course and luxury accommodation, The Malkai will also feature a fully serviced spa enclosed in a walled water garden. Additional facilities will include the main clubhouse, two restaurants, a boutique, delicatessen, a junior club and tennis courts.

The Malkai will also offer its own Beach Club within easy reach of the property for the exclusive use of residents and guests.

The project, while clearly contemporary, remains rooted in the essence of Omani architecture and tradition, giving a strong sense of place.

The extensive use of walls, screens, shadows and light throughout the design is a direct reference to its rich Arabian and Islamic architectural past. The use of outside spaces as extensions to the villas and suites, the shaded courtyards with their pools will also contribute to creating a unique experience.

This is carried through in the landscaped areas where date palms will be ever present. The narrow lanes, walkways and paths will form a world of shade and water leading to the suites. These traditional narrow spaces will open up to stunning views and perspectives across expanses of green and desert.

The signature villas will comprise a four bedroom property, designed as a central main pavilion surrounded by secondary bedroom pavilions in the landscaped garden.

From the gate, the walkway will guide the owner across a reflecting pond and through to the main door of the pavilion. The water pond will reflect the main façade at night and will enhance the sense of arrival for each person entering the house.

The main pavilion is to be a two floor building, on a 15m by 15m base, that houses the main reception area, the study/library, the TV room and guest bathroom on the ground floor and the master bedroom on the first floor. It will be designed to have a six metre high ceiling in the main reception areas with a vast glass front, rising from floor to ceiling and open onto the golf course. The master bedroom above will benefit from stunning views out to the golf course through the void of the living area while retaining full privacy for the owners. At the front of the main pavilion, a 15 m by 15 m landscaped area with a dining terrace will extend the internal spaces out to the garden and then open onto a third square of 15 m by 15 m which is the pool.

A fully serviced spa enclosed in a walled water garden is one of the highlights of The Malkai.



