

Carlson Rezidor, Africa's aspirational brand

By [Cari Coetzee](#)

13 Mar 2017

[Carlson Rezidor](#), one of the world's largest hotel groups, aims to be the leading player in the travel and tourism sector across Africa according to senior vice president business development Africa and Indian Ocean, Andrew McLachlan. The hotel group, which includes well-known brands such as Radisson Blu and Park Inn by Radisson, is well on its way to achieve its target of more than 23,000 rooms open or under development in Africa by the end of 2020. We spoke to Neil Hughes, brand manager for the group across Africa and the Indian Ocean, to find out what we can expect from this prolific brand in 2017.



Neil Hughes

■ Tell us about the Carlson Rezidor brand and what we can expect from the brand this year

Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group has been active on the African continent since 2000 with the opening of the first Radisson Blu Cape Town Waterfront within the V&A. Since then our Radisson Blu brand has catapulted into being the leading brand under development in Africa today.

Within the last 24 months, Carlson Rezidor has signed a new hotel deal to our portfolio every 32 days and opened a new hotel on the African continent every 60 days. In 2017, we will deliver at least eight new world-class hotels to the African

market. This list will include some exciting new brands for the group, with the introduction of Africa's first Radisson Red hotel opening in Cape Town in September 2017 and [Pearl of Africa](#) in Kampala, Uganda, the first on the continent from our new luxury brand, [Quorvus Collection](#).

■ ***Tell us more about these brands and the brand ethos that stands behind them***

We have two core brands: Radisson Blu and Park Inn by Radisson. Radisson Blu is our upper upscale brand which invokes style and sophistication within these iconic hotels and locations through our trademark *Yes I Can!* service philosophy. Park Inn by Radisson is our upper midmarket hotel brand offering uncomplicated service and facilities to our clients with a smile and by adding colour to life.

Quorvus Collection is our luxury branded collection of unique hotels around the world. Quorvus Collection is a new generation of expertly curated luxury hotels inspired by the lifestyle of the modern consumer. Individual, iconic, inspiring, each hotel within the collection offers a distinguished guest experience – an invitation to immerse oneself in the best a destination has to offer. It's a modern take on luxury - a different kind of exclusivity where our guests can experience the distinctive character of culture at the very heart of the city.

Radisson Red is our upscale lifestyle select brand, the brand connects with that "ageless millennial" mindset and we believe that hotels can enhance their world via art, music, fashion and a distinctive personal connection. At Radisson Red, the guest experience is everything. So we think in reverse.

“ *Instead of starting with a concept and hoping guests like it, we start with the emotions we want guests to experience, then create the concepts necessary to bring them to life.* ”

■ ***What does brand management mean to you?***

Brand management is all about the collaboration of each guest experience, and not only meeting but exceeding our guest expectations all the time. This drives us each day to deliver on our individual brand promises and create memorable moments for our guests.

Each brand has specific DNA running through its veins that excite and resonates with our global audience. It's up to the brand management team to ensure that all key elements are present in all new developments and current operating hotels to ensure our guest experiences are consistent throughout each of our hotels. Carlson Rezidor is proudly driving the importance of the guest experience and engagement within our hotels to the next level within the hospitality industry. Simply put, our brand teams are the custodians of this mission.

■ ***What's on your wish list for brand objectives for 2017?***

Our main objective is to remain consistent in delivering on our brand promises to our guests and creating as much value for our shareholders and partners as possible. This consistency is driven by the passion of our management teams within our hotels. Our brands have become the benchmark across the African continent in terms of quality and service level and this is something that we are very proud of.

Raising our brand profiles within the wider consumer base is also key to our 2017 objectives and the quality of the hotels we have opened in the last 24 months has been truly remarkable and a testament to this.

Two of our brands debut in Africa this year:

- We launch Africa's first **Radisson Red** here in the Mother City in Q3 2017. This hotel product will ignite the African hospitality experience and deliver a hotel experience that has never been offered before in Africa – watch this space and become part of the RED revolution!
- We also open the continent's first Quorvus Collection hotel in Kampala, Uganda in Q2 2017. This property will offer a unique African luxury hotel experience in the heart of Kampala.

▣ ***What are the main challenges and opportunities for the brand currently?***

Africa has many opportunities for companies that are willing to go the extra mile for investors, owners and guests. Carlson Rezidor is renowned for being innovative in its approach towards African hotel developments by tailoring each hotel individually to its specific market. It is important to understand the market you are operating in. Africa has many nuances that can very easily be overlooked if you are not paying attention to what the needs and requirements of a specific market are.

We would not be growing at the pace we are today if we did not fully understand our markets. Signing new hotel deals is one thing but opening these hotels is a totally different challenge, which many of our competitors are yet to overcome.

Over the past 30 months we have opened more than 15 hotels, which is more than any other hotel operator on the continent and we have only been able to do this because we have a full understanding of our trading environments and we have chosen partners who we are certain can deliver on their promises as well. Finding the right brand partners is key to the success of any hotel development and at Carlson Rezidor, we have been truly blessed to have found such owners and partners that believe in our brands and live the brand promises together with us, as we deliver superior products and services across Africa.

▣ ***What do you love most about your brand?***

We are always pushing the boundaries of architecture and design. This has been instilled across our brands from day one and we will never stop challenging the status quo and raising the benchmark for others to follow.

Our hotels stand out in Africa as the trendsetters in all aspects of our guest experience. Our brands such as Radisson Blu and soon Quorvus Collection, are recognised as aspirational brands in Africa and our guests feel a sense of accomplishment when they step into any of our hotels. It's up to us to deliver on our brand promises and keep our guests centre stage as we create memorable moments together.

ABOUT CARI COETZEE

Carri Coetzee is a contributor to Bizcommunity Tourism, Agriculture and Lifestyle.
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