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Asia's Hospitality Design Innovators Unveil Latest Leap In Luxury With Maldives Resort For Jumeirah

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THAILAND Blink Design Group (BLINK), Asia's rising star of inspired hospitality design, has lifted intelligent and environmentally-aware luxury to a new level with its recently-opened resort offering, Jumeirah Dhevanafushi Maldives.



The ultra-luxury hotel and resort brand's exotic new addition presented BLINK with a unique set of challenges, not least its location on a remote atoll in the pristine and almost uncharted southern waters of the famed chain of islands.

With the resort offering guests the choice of ocean over-water villas and beachfront villas in two very different locations, the challenge was creating two distinct faces of paradise while retaining a cohesive theme, a private island spirit and touches of glamour.

Guests would expect the requisite level of luxury, yet it was vital that environmental sensitivities and sustainable practices prevailed. And the nearest proper island offering any

semblance of logistical support was over 10km away just the sort of challenge relished by the creative thinkers at BLINK.

Jumeirah Dhevanafushi, which means "unique island" in Sanskrit, is located on the Gaafu Alifu atoll in the Maldives, 400 km south of the capital city of Malé. Another short hop by light aircraft then a 15-minute luxury speedboat ride to arrive at the resort that takes the tropical island escape to an intriguing new place.

BLINK Founder and Creative Director Clint Nagata, who is such a believer in the power of instinct and first impressions that he named his company for Malcolm Gladwell's seminal tome on the subject, understands better than anyone the importance of sense of arrival.

"From the moment you arrive by a luxurious private speed boat and are greeted at the 4.5m high arrival pavilion wrapped in carved lace-like screens, guests are given a hint of what lies ahead," he said. "We approached this design with the idea of one brand, two resorts' with absolute privacy for guests paramount. And when the resort's name means 'unique', well, that speaks for itself.



"Nestled within the lush tropical foliage of the atoll, the 206sqm and 306sqm beach and island villas have been fitted out in warm natural earth tones, with honey-coloured timber flooring, space to really spread your wings, and soaring ceiling heights. We have also been inspired by traditional Maldivian architectural elements, touches the knowledgeable traveller will appreciate."

Mr. Nagata also appreciates the need to pleasantly surprise guests with unexpected touches and some grand gestures. "At over 80sqm, the bathrooms are bigger than most hotel rooms. But that's the sort of epiphany that discerning guests appreciate most."

Strung out like pearls floating on a turquoise sea, the ocean villas – aptly named The Ocean Pearls – perch above pristine waters and reef-wreathed sandbars and make the definitive statement in escapism. Over half a kilometer offshore, these 270sqm and 340sqm villas are conceived to take every advantage of one of the world's most idyllic settings.

"When you have a natural environment this breathtaking luxury isn't about opulence and ostentation. True luxury at this level is about sensitivity to the landscape, or in this case, the seascape, and seamlessly integrating guests into another world.

"We've gone for subtle touches, like three-metre-wide beds you can get lost in, an outdoor soaking tub positioned near the vanishing edge pool to play on the idea of horizons, and a glass shower room with floor to ceiling glass that allows endless views of the sky as it melts into the sea."

In contrast to the villas, the main dining room, bar, and library are what Mr. Nagata describes as "a modern statement in simple luxury" with wood columns, terrazzo floors, and hand laid bamboo ceiling strips help to create warmth while complementing the natural beauty of the island.

Jumeirah Dhevanafushi adds to BLINK's impressive hospitality oeuvre, which includes cutting-edge design for international five-star hospitality groups Conrad, Hilton, Langham Place, Le Méridien, Regent, Sheraton, Westin and The Luxury Collection by Starwood Hotels and Resorts worldwide. BLINK continues to expand apace, with studios running at full steam in Bangkok, Singapore and New Delhi.

Mr. Nagata's visionary thinking on luxury resorts dovetails perfectly with the wider hospitality design experience of his fellow Creative Director, New Yorker Alan Barr, who said the Jumeirah project had been the perfect test for design's new dream team.

"This sort of challenge is exactly why I relish the partnership with Clint," Mr Barr said. "The combined talent across our studios, and the expanded offerings beyond traditional architecture and interior design puts us ahead of the competition. As a mature market for hospitality development, Asia is constantly craving something new. BLINK has the ambition, the creative fire in the belly and above all the vision to continue to deliver."

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