

Emirates Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa:

Australia's first luxury conservation-based resort

SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN OCTOBER THIS YEAR, THE CONSTRUCTION OF WOLGAN VALLEY RESORT & SPA - AUSTRALIA'S FIRST LUXURY CONSERVATION-BASED RESORT IN THE HEART OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS WORLD HERITAGE AREA IN NEW SOUTH WALES - IS NOW REACHING COMPLETION.

Joost Heymeijer, general manager, Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa, said the resort has already started taking bookings and is looking forward to receiving their first guests when the property conducts its soft opening on October 1.

Set on approximately 2000ha of wildlife reserve, Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa is Emirates Hotels & Resorts' first hospitality development outside Dubai and already, the \$125 million dollar project has set a new benchmark in conservation-based, exclusive, luxury accommodation.

The Resort - The resort features 40 one-, two- and three-bedroom individual suites surrounded by private decks, each with its own indoor/outdoor swimming pool, separate living and sleeping areas, luxurious ensuite bathroom and double sided fireplace.

The Main Homestead is a federation-styled building housing the Wolgan dining room and the Country Kitchen, a providore-style casual dining room offering informal meals throughout the day. Featuring a walk-in wine cellar and Valley Bar & Terrace, the Homestead also has a fully-equipped business centre that includes a private boardroom for a maximum of 10 delegates, intimate conference rooms and seminar facilities for up to 90 guests.

Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa incorporates Emirates Hotels & Resorts' own Timeless Spa branded facility. The Timeless Spa features six double treatment rooms, fully-equipped gymnasium and 25m outdoor infinity swimming pool.

The resort is also home to the original Wolgan Valley settler farm house from 1832 that has been converted and meticulously restored into the Heritage Homestead & Kitchen Garden where guests can also take meals.

Conservation - Having been built with the same principals as Emirates' acclaimed Al Maha Desert Resort & Spa, Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa is fully integrated into its environment and supports a wide-range of conservation practices focusing on endangered species protection.

The Wolgan conservancy project re-establishes and secures a future for many of the region's indigenous and endangered species. The comprehensive conservation program will include the regeneration of the Wolgan Valley reserve through the planting of thousands of trees native to the area, including one of the world's rarest, the wollemi pine tree. Thought to be extinct, the wollemi pine belongs to the 200 million year plant family and has been called 'the botanical find of the century' after it was discovered by chance in the Blue Mountains in 1994.

Sustainability - Sustainability is also an integral part of the Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa development. Environmentally-sustainable practices include rainwater collection, water recycling and the extensive use of solar panels that are incorporated into the framework of a green architecture ensuring the resort will sit lightly within the environment.

Responsible for this green architecture is Turner & Associates Architects. Dominic Bennett, partner at the architect firm said, "The architecture is quiet and defers to its spectacular natural context. The buildings are



Set on approximately 2000ha of wildlife reserve, Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa has set a new benchmark in conservation-based, exclusive, luxury accommodation.

grouped closely, built along contours and around watercourses and are sited on one of the most degraded parts of the site.

"The resort itself occupies a tiny proportion of the property and is a small but integral part of the conservation work going on around it," Dominic Bennett continued.

Built out of natural and recycled materials where possible, Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa contains a range of materials including sandstone and recycled timber, sourced locally from surrounding regions.

"Efficient and sustainable design of water, sewer and power infrastructure systems has been a significant influence on the resort design, including a black water treatment plant, gas boosted solar hot water system, rain water catchment and treatment, windmill water reticulation and use of recycled and local materials," Dominic Bennett commented.

"The palette of materials has been chosen to weather into the landscape over time, consisting predominately of timber, stone and zincalume," he added. "This approach means the aesthetic appeal of the buildings will continue to improve over time as they blend into the landscape and the regeneration work takes hold."

Landscaping efforts in and around the resort include grass that has been seeded and 25,000 trees using seeds from a local species collected onsite earlier in the year and grown at a local nursery in Lithgow.

Conservation Land Management consultant for Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa, Trevor Evans said, "A lot of attention goes into planting the right endemic species of trees. They need to be local, native trees and we had to conduct extensive research to identify the correct plant and tree species to protect the integrity of the current flora and fauna on the reserve."

With the assistance of David Noble, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services officer who rediscovered the wollemi pine in 1994, 60 wollemi pines - to date - have also been planted in the Wolgan Valley Grove, which can be visited as one of the nature-based activities on offer at the resort. Other nature-based activities include four-wheel drive safaris, mountain bike and horse-riding adventures, star gazing, heritage and indigenous interpretative tours, guided photographic excursions and guided walks to discover wildlife in its natural habitat.

Another conservation highlight includes the removal of all farm fences across the two former farming properties that now make up Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa. With wildlife - consisting mostly of kangaroos and wallabies - fatally snared on the fences, the resort aims to remove all barbed wire fencing from the property to reduce such fatalities.

A biodiversity research study was also launched earlier in the year with the University of Western Sydney to track the results of the resort's conservation plan and study the effects of creating a feral-free environment through the use of feral-exclusion fencing.

The property's 55-million litre water storage dam is now almost full and the conservation team have started to recreate suitable habitat conditions in anticipation for the replanting of aquatic vegetation and reintroducing native fish species such as fresh water blackfish, Australian bass and the rare mountain gallaxia later in the year.

"The possibilities to discover rare Australian wildlife in its natural habitat will be a major draw card for Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa. Guests will be able to create their own nature-based experience and do as much - or as little - as they desire. There is simply nothing like this in Australia," Trevor Evans concluded. ■ *Alexia Purcell - AMG Industry Reporter*



supplier profile

AH BEARD

The Emirates' Australian Heritage



Introducing the new *Wolgan Valley Heritage Collection* by AH Beard the sleep system of choice of the luxurious Emirates, Wolgan Valley Resort and Spa. Developed to exacting standards, AH Beard, Australia's own mattress brand offers sleeping luxury befitting Australia's newest luxury resort.

For over one hundred years AH Beard has been providing Australians with quality sleep, chances are your guests are sleeping on a bed by AH Beard and it's our heritage in sleep with world class manufacturing facilities, knowhow and the latest in sleep technologies that caught the eye of Joost Heymeijer, general manager of Wolgan Valley Resort and Spa.

Joost Heymeijer and Craig Hardy, guest services consultant for Emirates Hotels worked in close collaboration with AH Beard to ensure a signature sleep set that was in keeping with the highest standards in luxurious comfort that would exceed the expectations of their most discerning guests.

"Our search to find the ultimate bed ended when we found AH Beard," Heymeijer explained, "We had very strict guidelines on how we wanted our beds to look, feel and perform. We were pleased to work with AH Beard product development department to personalize the beds to our standards and develop a range to match the unrivalled exclusivity of service and luxury of the Wolgan Valley Resort and Spa.

The attention to detail in the *Wolgan Valley Heritage Collection* by AH Beard is reflected in the luxurious pillow top design utilising the highest quality comfort layers including pressure relieving natural latex with body conforming pocket spring support and custom made super king sizes ensuring the ultimate in luxurious sleep.

AH Beard believes the indulgent luxury of Wolgan Valley Resort and Spa combined with the unique sanctuary of the pristine Australian beauty, tranquility and peace shouldn't end when you go to sleep. "We wanted to create a sanctuary within a sanctuary" added AH Beard's commercial manager Vic Azzopardi, "The Heritage by AH Beard is designed to indulge guests with a luxuriously deep restorative sleep, a feeling of rejuvenation and ultimately an integral part of the *Wolgan Valley* experience".

About AH Beard - AH Beard has been supplying superior sleep to Australians for over one hundred years. A leading supplier to the hospitality industry, AH Beard utilizes superior production methods and materials to produce a broad range of products under brands such as *King Koil* and *Domino*, amongst others, with manufacturing facilities in all states of Australia and New Zealand.

For more information please contact Jenny Clifton, Group Commercial Manager, mobile 0412 209 472 or email jennyc@ahbeard.com.