**ROYAL COMMISSION FOR ALULA (RCU) – PRESS RELEASE 5 AUGUST 2019**

**Royal Commission for AlUla Announces Partnership with Prestigious Luxury Hotel & Resort Brand Aman**

* Three Aman destinations to be built at AlUla in North-West, Saudi Arabia
* First Aman resort to be developed in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East
* Step forward in Royal Commission for AlUla strategy to develop luxury visitor experiences
* Creating new jobs in the hospitality sector for the local community

**AlUla, Saudi Arabia, 5 August 2019:** The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) has announced a partnership with the world’s leading hotel and resort brand, Aman, who will develop their first three properties in AlUla.

The partnership agreement was signed by Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Culture, the Governor of the Royal Commission for AlUla His Highness Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Mohammad bin Farhan Al Saud and Chairman and Aman CEO Mr. Vladislav Doronin marking the brand’s first entry to Saudi Arabia and the region.

Under the terms of a Technical Services Agreement, Aman will develop three distinct luxury resorts of architectural excellence including a tented camp, a resort near AlUla’s spectacular heritage areas and a third development as a desert ranch-style resort.

Detailed design work on all three properties is scheduled to commence in the coming months with a development timeline that will welcome the first guests in 2023.

Commenting on the agreement, His Highness Prince Badr said: “We are proud to be signing this agreement with a luxury operator who shares our vision of sensitive development that both works with and incorporates the local landscape and culture in a highly sympathetic manner, while demonstrating our commitment to delivering an extraordinary visitor experience in AlUla.”

He added, “The decision by Aman to open its first resorts in the Middle East in AlUla shows the promise and progress of the vision for AlUla to become a worldwide destination for those seeking unique experiences. I believe this partnership will be the next step in the development of the yet to be discovered masterpiece that is AlUla.”

RCU and Aman have also signed a partnership to design, manage and brand the destinations as Aman, offering the refined Aman guest experience that goes beyond any expectation.

Chairman and CEO of Aman Mr. Vladislav Doronin welcomed the new partnership and said: “Many of our existing Aman destinations are located in areas of outstanding natural beauty and rich history. With the addition of spectacular AlUla, this takes us to ten properties situated near or in UNESCO heritage sites, making it a fitting location for our first destination in the Middle East.”

He added: “Aman is committed to preserving this archaeological wonder with our resorts that will blend into the dramatic surroundings. As part of Aman’s pathfinder spirit, we have a continued mission to not only curate resorts of architectural distinction, but to seek out and introduce our guests to new destinations and experiences.”

The Aman partnership is the second major international resort development for the AlUla region and follows the planned Jean Nouvel-designed resort within the Sharaan Nature Reserve, showcasing architecture hosted by nature.

This milestone is part of RCU’s overall strategic planning to ensure that AlUla welcomes top tourism and hospitality opportunities and attracts more hotel operators, developers and investors to join the Commission on its journey of transformation to build a thriving long-term destination for visitors from around the world.

Such developments create open new opportunities for the local community, and most importantly, the development of these resorts will afford young Saudi nationals from AlUla the opportunity to be trained by some of the most globally renowned hospitality professionals in the world.

RCU also plans to hold a series of workshops and seminars aimed at providing information and training to help local people in AlUla to benefit from these new exciting career opportunities that are being offered by the hotel sector.

The first of the Aman developments will be a spa concept resort featuring 30 luxury tents. This is being developed within a secluded and tranquil mountain valley that is close to many of AlUla’s main cultural and heritage areas.

The second resort will be constructed in an area of outstanding natural beauty within AlUla and reinforce Aman’s global commitment to delivering transformative experiences in awe-inspiring locations.

A third resort will encompass a desert ranch style with panoramic views of the splendid natural beauty of AlUla.

The anticipated resorts will be part of AlUla’s commitment to delivering excellence in hospitality infrastructure for guests to enjoy its year-long tourism seasons; including the spectacular Winter at Tantora culture and arts season, that was launched in 2018.

All three projects will embrace eco-tourism standards in line with RCU’s commitment to responsible development as outlined in its charter, and Aman’s aim to ensure its destinations are pervaded by a tranquil simplicity offering unmatched opportunities for exploration and discovery.

**-- ENDS --**

**For any media enquiries please contact the RCU Public Relations team at: PublicRelations****@rcu.gov.sa**

**Notes to editors**

**About AlUla**

Located 1,100 km from Riyadh, in North-West Saudi Arabia, AlUla is a place of extraordinary natural and human heritage. The vast area, covering 22,561km², includes a lush oasis valley, towering sandstone mountains and ancient cultural heritage sites dating back thousands of years to when the Lihyan and Nabataean kingdoms reigned.

The most well-known and recognised site in AlUla is Hegra, Saudi Arabia’s first UNESCO World Heritage Site. A 52-hectare ancient city, Hegra was the principal southern city of the Nabataean Kingdom and is comprised of more than 100 well preserved tombs with elaborate facades cut out of the sandstone outcrops surrounding the walled urban settlement.

Current research suggests Hegra was the most southern outpost of the Roman Empire after conquering the Nabataeans in 106 CE.

In addition to Hegra, AlUla is home to a series of fascinating historical and archaeological sites such as: Ancient Dadan, the capital of the Dadan and Lihyan Kingdoms, which is considered one of the most developed 1st-millennium BCE cities of the Arabian Peninsula; thousands of ancient rock art sites and inscriptions; and Hijaz Railway stations.

**About The Royal Commission for AlUla**

The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) was established by royal decree in July 2017 to protect and safeguard AlUla, a region of outstanding natural and cultural significance in North-West Saudi Arabia. RCU is embarking on a long-term plan to develop and deliver a sensitive, sustainable transformation of the region, reaffirming it as one of the country's most important archaeological and cultural destinations and preparing it to welcome visitors from around the world. RCU’s development work in AlUla encompasses a broad range of initiatives across archaeology, tourism, culture, education and the arts, reflecting the ambitious commitment to cultivate tourism and leisure in Saudi Arabia, outlined in Vision 2030.

**About Aman**

Aman was founded in 1988 with the vision of building a collection of intimate retreats with the unassuming, warm hospitality of a gracious private home. The first, Amanpuri (place of peace) in Phuket, Thailand, introduced the concept, and since then, Aman has grown to encompass 37\* exquisitely serene hotels and resorts in 22 destinations across the world. The introduction of Aman Skincare in 2018 continued the holistic journey beyond the perimeters of Aman’s havens.  Offering a soothing journey to a place of beautifully scented repose and respite, Aman Skincare represents the spirit of Aman in a bottle. Cementing Aman’s commitment to providing guests with insightful and unique cultural experiences, Atma, launched in 2019, curates one-off events that are inspired by Aman destinations and designed to connect mind, body and spirit.

\*Located in Bhutan, Cambodia, China, the Dominican Republic, France, Greece, Indonesia, India, Italy, Japan, Laos, Mexico (2020), Montenegro, Morocco, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia (2023), Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, the Turks & Caicos Islands, the USA (New York 2020) and Vietnam.