

MEDIA RELEASE
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MARAYA WINS PRESTIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE AWARD

Maraya, a multi-purpose concert and entertainment venue in AlUla, North West Saudi Arabia, has been named a winner in one of the world's biggest architecture awards.

AlUla is a destination of global significance with 200,000 years of human history and culture at the crossroads of ancient civilisations. The Architizer A+ Awards is the world's largest awards program focused on promoting and celebrating the year's best architecture.

Run by New York based Architizer.com, a seven million plus online community of leading architects, the annual awards consist of five peer judged finalists with one jury winner and one popular choice winner in each category.

A finalist in the Architecture + Glass category, Maraya was selected by distinguished luminaries from fields as diverse as design, technology, real estate and fashion. Finalists were selected for excellence in architecture with criteria based on form, function and impact.

Maraya achieved the most public votes in its category to be named the 2020 popular choice winner.

Phillip Jones, Chief Destination Management and Marketing Officer at Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) welcomed the announcement saying that though Maraya is currently closed for further enhancements, the venue will be a key draw factor when AlUla officially re-opens to visitors as a year-round destination in late 2020.

"It's perhaps particularly gratifying to win the popular vote. Visitors are truly mesmerised by Maraya's impact and by the way it blends in so perfectly and reflects its surroundings."

"Maraya has been conceived and designed as part of the Saudi Vision 2030 and in line with RCU's core values to develop AlUla using a sensitive and responsible approach. AlUla is a significant, undiscovered archaeological wonder and we look forward to welcoming the world when we re-open the sites," said Mr Jones.

Maraya is one of the world's architectural marvels, a total of 9740 square metres of mirrors, supplied by Guardian Glass, cover the exterior walls of the cube-shaped structure reflecting the vast and stunning desert surroundings of AlUla. The building set a Guinness World Record for being the largest mirrored building in the world in 2019 with its 26-metre-high theatre.

Maraya's giant retractable window of more than 800 square metres opens to nature for an authentic experience blending nature and entertainment.

In Arabic 'Maraya' means mirrors. The building, by designer Florian Boje of Gio Forma, Milan was inspired by the landscape in the same way that the landscape has inspired architecture and art for civilisations from the Nabataeans through to this day.

International artists who performed at Maraya in its first year include Andrea Bocelli, Lionel Richie and Yanni. The site has recently been a location for commercial film shoots by luxury brands Cartier, Rolls Royce and Monot.

"AlUla was at the crossroad of cultural exchange for millennia. With Maraya, we are one step further to realising our vision to recreate a place to dream, a place that inspires and facilitates the sharing of cultures and ideas," said Mr Jones.

Another focus for RCU is to deliver economic value to local residents and business via an ambitious business events strategy. With its central location in the GCC and enhancements including increased capacity, a dedicated conference floor, a ground floor restaurant and a stunning rooftop terrace, Maraya is well-positioned to host regional and international business events, conferences as well as weddings and other special events when it re-opens ready for business in late 2020.

Ends.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) was established on July 20th, 2017 to protect and safeguard AlUla, embarking on a long-term plan to develop and deliver a sensitive, sustainable transformation of the region, reaffirming it as one of country's most important archaeological and cultural destinations and preparing it to welcome visitors from around the world.
- The full list of Architizer A + Award winners can be found here <https://awards.architizer.com/winners-gallery/>
- Giò Forma's Italian-German group of Florian Boje, Cristiana Picco and Claudio Santucci headed the architecture and design team for Maraya while Massimo Fogliati and Fabio Pavanetto of Black Engineering managed the project.
- Guardian Glass Middle East entered Maraya for the award and supplied the 9740 square metres of mirrors.
- AlUla is located in North West Saudi Arabia, one-hour flight from Riyadh. Maraya is located in the historic Ashar Valley, ten-minute drive from Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, Hegra.
- Visitors will be able to access AlUla's main heritage sites including Hegra, Dadan, Jabal Ikma and access cultural touring options and a range of adventure experiences from October 2020.

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