

## Royal Commission for AlUla unveils expansion with Accor in partnership with the Banyan Tree brand

- > Signature agreement will see Accor, under the Banyan Tree brand, operate an expanded Ashar Resort with 47 new high-end units added bringing the total number up to 82.
- > Sebastien Bazin, Chairman and CEO of Accor: “...we are extremely proud to take part in the development of the historic county of AlUla thus celebrating the Kingdom’s vast heritage and culture.”

**AlUla, Saudi Arabia, 9 August 2020:** The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) has announced a partnership agreement with Accor as part of its strategy to develop AlUla as a tourism destination for nature, culture and heritage.

The agreement will see Accor operate an expanded Ashar Resort under the Banyan Tree brand. There will be 47 new units added, which will bring the resort’s total number up to 82 high-end villas, along with a luxury spa and several gourmet restaurants. This will be guided by a sensitive design that allows each villa to blend discreetly into the striking natural scenery of the Ashar valley, located 15km from the Kingdom’s first UNESCO World Heritage Site, Hegra.

The partnership with the leading global hospitality group has been signed ahead of AlUla’s official opening to the world as a year-round destination in October 2020.

The announcement underscores AlUla’s investment potential as Saudi Arabia continues its economic diversification as part of its Vision 2030 programme. By 2035, RCU expects to host 2 million visitors annually, creating 38,000 new jobs.

Ashar valley is the location of the Maraya Hall, a multi-purpose exhibition, conference and entertainment venue, the largest mirrored structure in the world, which will also drive local economic diversification by hosting cultural events, business gatherings and conferences. These have included the Hegra Conference for Nobel Laureates and global figures such as Andrea Bocelli, Majida Al Roumi and Lionel Richie.

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### Expansion of the luxury resort will see 47 new high-end villas

High Resolution Link:  
<http://rcushare.com/qGrdT>



### Resort will be operated under the Banyan Tree brand

High Resolution Link:  
<http://rcushare.com/j2YLq>

Commenting on the agreements, the CEO of the Royal Commission for AlUla, Amr AlMadani, said: “This new partnership demonstrates how AlUla’s unique appeal as a cultural, heritage and nature destination fits with Accor’s Banyan Tree brand, which is synonymous with authentically unique experiences. We’re working with the world’s best developers and hotel operators to deliver projects that complement our cultural oasis, as well as benefitting our local community.”

“The partnership agreement with Accor is part of a major series of capital projects and multiple investments made by RCU into fifteen plans in AlUla, many of which will be announced in the coming months. This is a clear sign of our confidence in the future strength of the hospitality sector in Saudi Arabia.”

Sebastien Bazin, Chairman and CEO of Accor said: “In line with our commitment to grow Accor’s unique portfolio in Saudi Arabia, and as one of the first global hospitality groups to set foot in the Kingdom, we are extremely proud to take part in the development of the historic county of AlUla, thus celebrating the Kingdom’s vast heritage and culture. We are very excited to be working on bringing our partner brand Banyan Tree’s unique sanctuary offering to the Ashar Resort.”

Commenting on the agreement, Bander M. Alharbi, Head of Hotels and Resorts at the Royal Commission for AlUla, said: “The Ashar Resort forms part of our strategy to create an immersive boutique destination that offers transformative experiences around the year and sets the standard for authentic hospitality.”

Global partnerships are a central component of RCU’s approach to driving economic growth through sustainable development in AlUla. The Accor agreement accents the region’s enduring relationship with French partners. Last month saw the two-year anniversary of AFALULA, the French Agency for AlUla Development, which has launched more than 51 joint projects since its foundation.

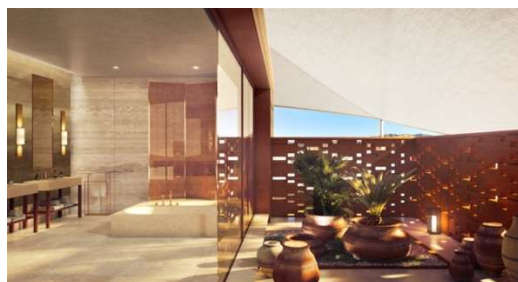
RCU’s sustainable development strategy is guided by 12 strategic principles drawn from its Framework Plan and Charter that will shape the integration of luxury tourism while safeguarding the natural landscape and putting the local community at the centre of AlUla’s development.

Recent successes alongside the community include the Hammayah, a community advocacy and engagement initiative which will provide 2,500 employment opportunities for the people of the AlUla County, and Rawi programmes, which have seen hundreds of local residents become guides

## Press Release

and storytellers for visitors. This is complemented by initiatives cultivating the human capital in AIUla such as a scholarship programme which has provided more than 500 local students with the opportunity to study courses relevant to AIUla's development at leading institutions around the world.

The Accor agreement further advances the vision of AIUla which was launched by the His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman AlSaud, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Royal Commission for AIUla in 2019. The signing of the agreement was overseen by His Highness Prince Bader bin Farhan Al-Saud, Governor of the Royal Commission for AIUla.



**1, 2 and 3 Bedroom luxury villas will be developed**

High Resolution Link:

<http://rcushare.com/viPUx>



**The resort will be located near AIUla's signature mirrored Maraya Hall**

High Resolution Link:

<http://rcushare.com/hHekK>

For media enquiries please contact the RCU Public Relations team at [publicrelations@rcu.gov.sa](mailto:publicrelations@rcu.gov.sa)

### Notes to Editors

Project Partners include:

- Nesma & Partners Contracting Co Ltd - Infrastructure and Electrification Network
- AECOM Arabia Limited Company – Engineering Supervision & Project Management
- AW2 Architecture Workshop – Lead Architects, Ashar Tented Resort
- Gulf Co-Operations Symbols Contracting – GCS Main Construction Contractor, Ashar Resort Expansion
- GAJ – Goodwin Austen Johnson Architects, Using Al Hamdan Consultant Office – Architect of Record
- Assustem & Ali AlHarbi Engineering Consultancy Company – Engineering Office for Electrical Designs

### About AIUla

Located 1,100km from Riyadh in north-west Saudi Arabia, AIUla is a place of extraordinary natural and human heritage. The vast area, covering 22,561km<sup>2</sup>, includes a lush oasis valley, towering sandstone mountains and ancient cultural heritage sites dating back thousands of years.

The most well-known and recognised site in AIUla 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

## Press Release

elaborate facades cut into sandstone outcrops. Current research suggests Hegra was the most southern outpost of the Romans after conquering the Nabataeans in 106 CE.

In addition to Hegra, AIUla 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 AIUla

Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU) was established to preserve and develop AIUla, a region of outstanding natural and cultural significance in North-West Saudi Arabia. RCU's vision, which was launched by HRH the Crown Prince in February 2019, outlines a responsible, sustainable, and sensitive approach to urban and economic development, that preserves the area's natural and historic heritage, while establishing AIUla as a desirable location to live, work, and visit. This encompasses a broad range of initiatives across archaeology, tourism, culture, education and the arts, reflecting a commitment to meeting the economic diversification, local community empowerment, and heritage preservation priorities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 programme.

### About Accor

Accor is a world-leading augmented hospitality group offering unique experiences in more than 5000 hotels and residences across 110 destinations. The Group has been acquiring hospitality expertise for more than 50 years, resulting in an unrivaled portfolio of 39 hotel brands, from luxury to economy. The Group also offers digital solutions that maximize distribution, optimize hotel operations and enhance the customer experience.

With ALL - Accor Live Limitless, the new daily lifestyle companion, the relationship between the Group and his clients, members and partners evolves from transactional to emotional, and unlocks the potential to live, work, and play. Beyond accommodation, ALL enables new ways to live, work, and play, by blending food and beverage with nightlife, wellbeing, and co-working.

Accor is deeply committed to sustainable value creation and plays an active role in giving back to planet and community via its Planet 21 – Acting Here program and the Accor Solidarity endowment fund, which gives disadvantaged groups access to employment through professional training.

Accor SA is publicly listed on the Euronext Paris Stock Exchange (ISIN code: FR0000120404) and on the OTC Market (Ticker: ACRYF) in the United States. For more information visit [group.accor.com](http://group.accor.com) Or become a fan and follow us on Twitter and Facebook.