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Mangalis on a mission to blanket Africa

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Mangalis Hotel Group aims to be among the largest African hospitality groups active on the continent.



In late September, Mangalis Hotel Group announced its newest concept for Africa: economy brand Yaas Hotels. (Rendering: Mangalis Hotel Group)

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Highlights

- Late last month the group announced its economy brand, Yaas Hotels.
- The "Plug & Play" solution allows hotels to be built on time and on budget.
- The company is focused on West Africa at present.

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GLOBAL REPORT—Barcelona-based Mangalis Hotel Group, a subsidiary of Abidjan-based Teyliom Group, is on a mission to develop and manage "new and exciting African hospitality brands," according to CEO Olivier Jacquin.

"Mangalis Hotel Group aims to be among the largest African hospitality groups active in the continent while being the industry's undisputed benchmark in terms of products, innovation, quality of service and healthy growth," Jacquin wrote via email.

The company is developing 16 hotels with more than 2,400 rooms in 13 African countries.

Late last month the management group announced its newest concept in Africa: economy brand Yaas Hotels.

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Created with the budget traveler in mind, the hotels will be located near city centers, airports, train stations and main highways, Jacquin said.

"Africa is going through a remarkable decade of economic transformation and, as an African company, we are striving to meet the rapid market needs and introduce novel and exciting brands," he said. "After conducting in-depth market studies by external consulting agencies, we found out that Africa lacks hotels in the economy segment."

He said Mangalis executives are determined to take advantage of this lack of supply opportunity in Africa, where the branded hotel chain penetration index is below mature markets. For example, he said the index is less than 6% in West Africa, while Europe is at 26% and the United States is at 70%.

"Furthermore, and given the different types of travelers nowadays, we opted to cater to Africa with a totally revolutionary brand in the economy segment," the CEO said. "Yaas hotels are fully connected, tastefully designed and can accommodate younger or older travelers, families or business travelers. The 2-star segment dominates the worldwide hospitality inventory industry."

Mangalis, established in 2011 as part of West African holding Teyliom Group, counts two other brands in its portfolio: upscale Noom Hotels and midscale Seen Hotels.

Noom Hotels, developed in 2012, acts as the company's business-focused brand and also will be the flagship for entering the resort segment in Africa.

Seen Hotels was developed a year later. Jacquin described the brand as "trendy, different and fully connected with Wi-Fi throughout the property." Located near business districts or airports of major cities, the brand was conceived for business travelers or short leisure getaways.

The Noom Hotel Conakry in Guinea and the Yaas Hotel Almadies in Dakar will be the group's first openings, in the first and second quarters of 2015, respectively.

Additional hotels in Pointe-Noire, Congo; Cotonou, Benin; and Abidjan will be open in the second half of 2015 and beginning of 2016 under the Noom and Seen brands.

Plug & Play

Mangalis offers a turn-key solution for development. The "Plug & Play" solution allows hotels to be built on time and on budget, Jacquin said.

"The technical department at Mangalis can be in charge of the project management, deploying the knowledge acquired in the construction of our own hotels and leveraging on our reduced cost of construction achieved through corporate agreements," he said.

He said the company is developing hotels at a cost that is generally 20% to 30% lower than market.

"Once the hotel is ready, the operational management team will start the pre-opening procedures to provide the hotel owner with an efficient opening and focus on revenue and costs during the life of the hotel," the CEO said.

The Plug & Play option has been enhanced for the Yaas brand by introducing modular construction benefits.

"This type of building ensures better construction quality management and takes 80% of the in-site construction operations," Jacquin said.

"As owners are looking for faster (return on investment), costs and timeline control with more sustainable designs, modular construction is obviously a



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natural fit. Our solutions allow building in a controlled environment and reduce costs and waste," he added.

Born and bred in Africa

"We are an African group, born in Africa, with a clear objective to introduce the new era of the African hospitality to the world," Jacquin said.

"Therefore, our brands fit perfectly the African market and traveler because we do understand the DNA of Africa, blending top contemporary design with the latest trends in hospitality."

West Africa is the company's main focus at present, he said. From there, the company will expand to East and Central African countries.

"Africa is evolving rapidly, and we need to act as fast as this evolution and rise to the expectations of the continent," Jacquin said. "There are plenty of opportunities such as the rise in business travel, the fast development of coastal cities, which entails potential of seaside tourism. Also, there are mega transportation and infrastructure improvement projects, new airports, harbors, convention cities in Dakar, Abidjan, Conakry, Cotonou and Lagos."

But the continent is not without its issues, the CEO said. Some of the challenges include: fragmented pan-African and international circulation regulations, the lack of transversal intraregional transportation and high costs.

Even so, company executives aim for Mangalis brands to be present in every African city, Jacquin said.

"In the meantime, we are also very open to present our African hospitality standards beyond the African market," he said. "We welcome adequate and doable opportunities for our brands anywhere, especially in southern Europe where we believe our brands can fit perfectly as well as for the rest of the Europe, and the Middle East will be considered, too."

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Paul Womaungo

10/14/2014 12:05:00 PM

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