

Gardens in the Desert



Egypt is entering a new dimension. A spectacular project is taking shape on the Red Sea: Sahl Hasheesh, much more than a luxury resort. It is a town with a soul, culture and wonderful investment opportunities

On the Red Sea a new era is beginning for Egypt, at least in the field of quality tourism. The land of the pharaohs and pyramids is charting a new course, seen as a leap into a luxurious future. Income from tourism already contributes a substantial part of the gross national product of Egypt. That is why the country is raising the stakes in this business – but with a new dimension, attracting not just holiday-makers but also, to an increasing extent, residents and investors.

The first steps on the way to becoming a top international destination were taken some time ago: there is an enormous range of reasonably-priced holidays, as well as a scattering of more ambitious resorts. The formerly sleepy little fishing village of Hurghada, for example, has emerged as a major tourist centre, with the infrastructure to match and an airport that is already being enlarged to accommodate the great volume of traffic. But the premium destination in this historic land on the Nile is now arising to the south of Hurghada. In a

location that until recently consisted of nothing but desert and water, one of the world's most remarkable holiday property projects is taking shape: Sahl Hasheesh. Sahl can be translated as “valley”, and Hasheesh means (yes, you guessed it!) “grass”. In other words: “green valley” or “green meadow”.

Its size alone makes Sahl Hasheesh more than just another resort. It is a real town that combines all the facilities of a top resort with the atmosphere of a lively port. This green place on the Red Sea will expand

over an area of 32 million square metres bordered by a sandy beach 12.5 kilometres long. 180 million euros have so far been invested just for roads, water-pipes, earthworks and electric cables. And the same amount has been spent on basic construction work, and individual developers will pour many more millions into the project.

Sahl Hasheesh is a mega-project that heralds the beginning of a new era for tourism in Egypt. It goes without saying that an undertaking on this scale requires perfect organisation. Egypt wants Sahl Hasheesh to be a front-runner in the competition for the best-conceived resort of the future. The number of jobs that is envisaged helps to convey an idea of the dimensions of this emerging city. “In seven years at the latest, more than 15,000 people will be working



ARRIVING Hurghada is a destination for many European airlines. The flight time is approximately four hours

here”, says Saad Abu Rida, governor of the Red Sea district.

The landowner is ERC, the Egyptian Resorts Company, which supervises the whole project. In accordance with its master plan (see page ••), the land was divided into individual sectors, within which the developers could create their plans and build. Sahl Hasheesh will be constructed in three phases altogether. The luxury hotels Pasha and Alexander (see model on next page) and the Old Palace, which will be managed by the Kempinski Group, as well as the Aparthotel Palm Beach Piazza and the piazza itself are already under construction. They are all scheduled to open this year.

Sahl Hasheesh meets all the requirements for a popular holiday destination: ►

PHOTOS: Promotors (2); MAP: www.AeikKock.de



PALMS AND SEA By the end of 2006 the Hotel Alexander (model above) and the Aparthotel Palm Beach Piazza with its own beach (below) will be open. The piazza and part of the “old town” will be completed this year (centre)

the flight time from European airports averages a mere four hours on, it hardly ever rains, and even in winter the water temperature never falls below twenty degrees Celsius: unbeatable arguments that have convinced the tour operators.

Or, as Dr Hussein Abu Seida, Managing Director of ERC, puts it: “We want to become one of the best places in the sun – worldwide.” The ERC intends to achieve its aim by creating a town with a soul and above all a

“Especially in Europe, the property on offer has met with an almost euphoric reception



ROLF VAN GOOR,
RESORT ALLIANCE TRUST

place that is alive, what is known as an integrated resort. That means that there will be hospitals and schools as well as the luxury villas and apartments that can be expected in a premium resort. And of course all the facilities for a comprehensive programme of leisure activities, with a marina for 300 boats, diving bases and golf courses as well as cinemas, a casino, restaurants, cafés and shops in the “old town”, which will be completed this year. The heart of this newly-created city is the piazza, a market place surrounded by imposing arcades that lead to the Red Sea. Here, defying the desert, there will be a lot of plants and water. Well over 100,000 fully-grown palms are being specially brought in from the Nile.

Egyptian civilisation is also being imported to Sahl Hasheesh – from the pyramids of Gizeh and the temples of Karnak and Kom Ombo right down to the Nile delta. In miniature, admittedly, but exact in all the details. Anyone who decides to miss out on the day trip to Luxor, for example, can enjoy the miniature version in the resort and dive among the columns of the “sunken city”, an

underwater temple. By incorporating these cultural elements, Sahl Hasheesh pays homage to thousands of years of history and thus sees itself as a link between the old and the new Egypt.

The facilities for sports fans are also high-class. For divers there are coral reefs right on the doorstep. And for golfers work will begin early this year on a spectacular course – the first of eight which are planned. An exotic 27-hole golf course, designed by the top German architect Kurt Rossknecht and the ex-singer and golf freak Howard Carpendale (see interview), will arise in the middle of the desert.

The project has already met with great interest on the part of business people, investors, tourists and residents from all over the world. All 300 planned shops have been let – a full year before they open. “And there are a further 2,400 interested parties on the waiting list”, says Rolf van Goor of Resort Alliance Trust. His company has the exclusive rights for marketing residential property in Sahl Hasheesh.

Demand for this property is already lively, even though the official PR campaign has

“1.5 persons per room will be employed in Sahl Hasheesh, equivalent to well over 15,000 people



SAAD ABU RIDA, GOVERNOR
OF THE RED SEA DISTRICT

not yet kicked off. Van Goor is delighted to report that 60 per cent of the apartments in Palm Beach Piazza have already been sold. These comfortable air-conditioned apartments are ready for occupation early this year – including, if desired, hotel service and a private beach, which in contrast to Spain is permitted in Egypt.

The sensational prices are without doubt a convincing argument. An apartment can ▶



CULTURAL OASIS Rolf van Goor of Resort Alliance Trust with the new holiday town (above left). The columns for the “sunken city” are reproducing the details of the originals (above right). The entrance gate (below) will soon be ready, too

Rules of the Game

Legal Tips: Buying Property in Sahl Hasheesh

Who is allowed to buy?

Special legislation means that foreigners have the same rights as citizens of Egypt when buying property. This applies only to the tourist regions. The risk for first buyers is small, as the first sellers are trustworthy developers.

Entry in land registry

The purchaser becomes owner of the property when an entry is made in the land register. This may take some months. Legislation to speed up the process is being prepared. A European trustee should be used to monitor payments.

Tips

For the property purchase it is advisable to employ a lawyer who takes care of everything on the spot, or to work with a management company that operates locally and is responsible for all services, from house maintenance to billing the annual charges.

Advice

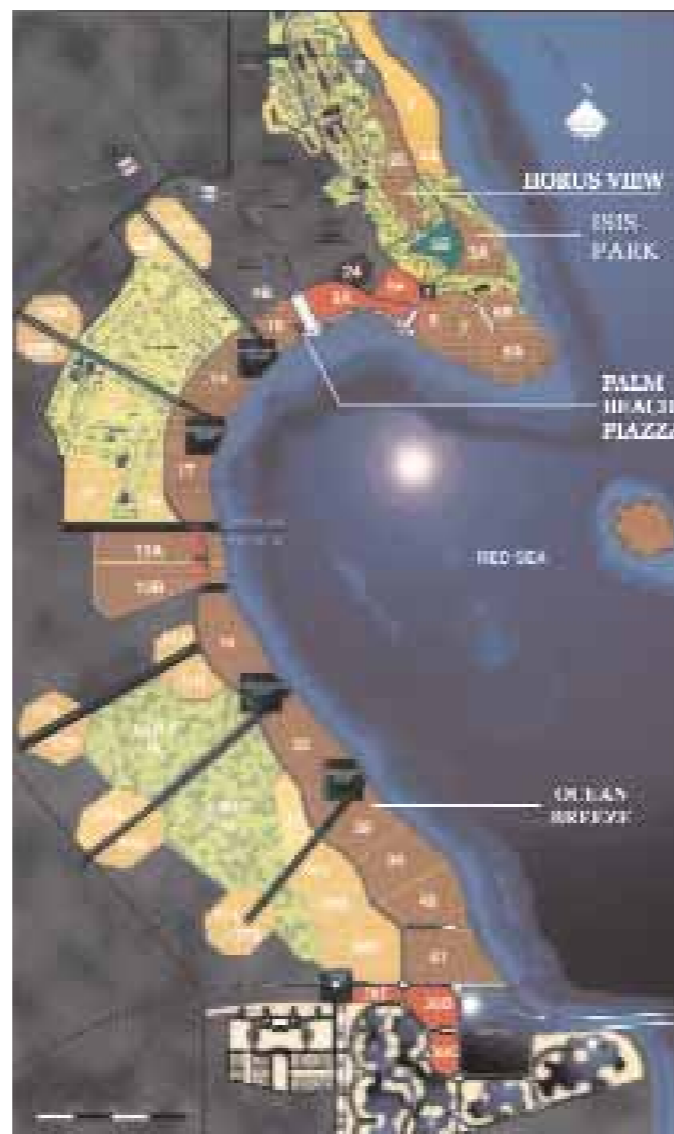
Further information and tips are available from the lawyer Dr. Stephan Jäger, who is familiar with the Sahl Hasheesh project.

Contact: multi-lingual legal practice Krauss Amereller Henkenborg, with offices in Egypt (Cairo, tel. +20 (0)2 738 40 90) and Germany (Munich, tel. +49 (0)89 549 01 90) and elsewhere.

be had for as little as 59,420 euros. The prices for detached houses are similarly attractive: in the Ocean Breeze sector, where since early 2006 mini-palaces have been under construction right on the crystal-clear water of the Red Sea, a fully-furnished two-bedroom villa costs about 260,000 euros. A further 29 designer homes with their own beach are going up in the Isis Park.

And what about the prospects for return on investment? "Holiday homes are booming worldwide at the moment", says van Goor. "Not least through the re-sale business, dream profits have been made in the past in many locations. We believe that Sahl Hasheesh provides our investors with this potential on a long-term basis."

In Sahl Hasheesh the construction workers, too, regard the future optimistically. They see the project as the sign of a fresh start for themselves and their country. Their manual skills are creating complex dome structures, they are lifting heavy iron templates and inscribing columns with hieroglyphs. They are laying the foundations for an ambitious project that shows where the future lies – and then the visitors will come, to fill Sahl Hasheesh with life.



MASTER PLAN The Palm Beach Piazza, Isis Park and Ocean Breeze residential projects are located in sectors 9B, 38 and 5A. A sandy beach 12.5 kilometres long fringes the bay

Interview

Greens in the desert

An interview with golf architect Kurt Rossknecht and designer Howard Carpendale

BELLEVUE: Mr Rossknecht, Mr Carpendale, what is it about a golf course in the desert that attracts you?

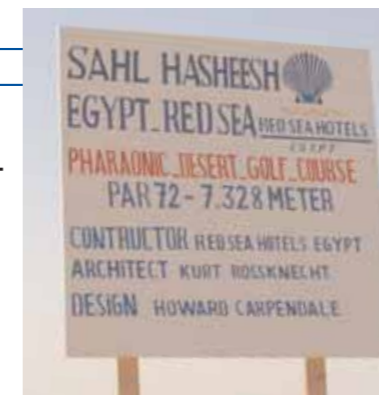
Kurt Rossknecht: This is my 70th course, and the main challenge for me is to create fairways in this rugged desert terrain with deep-cut valleys. And to manage the irrigation, so that a failure of the water supply doesn't cause problems.

Howard Carpendale: We have just seen the consequences of water supply failure on another desert course. The grass turns brown straight away. That is why we want to create a park landscape full of rivers and lakes. This is intended as a place not just for golfers, but for the other visitors to Sahl Hasheesh. With separate paths, of course, so that players and non-players don't get in the way of each other. What I also want is the kind of service on the course that I am used to from America.

BELLEVUE: What does that involve?

Carpendale: Permanent service on the course and a pavilion on every third green with refreshments and toilets. This is the top service that I want in Sahl Hasheesh too.

BELLEVUE: How do you plan to irrigate the desert?



TWO IN ONE A combined park and golf course: Kurt Rossknecht and Howard Carpendale are designing an exotic course in the desert

Rossknecht: The water will come from a seawater desalination plant designed with a capacity for three courses. That is about 3,000 cubic metres of water per course per day. On top of that comes the treated waste water from the hotels and the other buildings in the resort, which will be mixed with the desalinated seawater

BELLEVUE: Are further courses planned?

Rossknecht: Yes. Early this year the construction of this 27-hole course with driving range will commence. The conception for two further courses is ready, and five additional courses are planned. That means that a total of eight golf courses will be built.

BELLEVUE: Mr Carpendale, in 2003 you brought your career as a singer to an end. What gave you the idea of designing a golf course?

Carpendale: That's something I always dreamed of doing. The idea has

been maturing for a long time. Kurt Rossknecht and I make an ideal team. We work together perfectly to put our ideas into practice. The great thing is that our client has given us complete freedom in designing the course. Apart from this we are proud to be able to carry out a small part of this gigantic project.

BELLEVUE: Is a golf course comparable to being on stage at a major venue?

Carpendale: As with stage productions, it is important to get the details right on a golf course. Everything has to be just perfect. Of course there will never be an absolutely new course. Just as there are no longer songs with melodies that seem completely unfamiliar. But with subtle details and a character of its own, our course can be distinct from others – like an ever-green song.

Rossknecht: Maybe, for example, we will design a course without any bunkers ...

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