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DESTINATIONS

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Readers: Our Most Precious Asset

“We are also looking into the management of hybrid projects, offering hotel guestrooms and apartment units within the same development”



Spearheading Oakwood's operations in the Asia Pacific region is **Dean Schreiber, Managing Director, Oakwood Asia Pacific Ltd.** Using his 30+ years of experience in the hospitality industry and numerous contacts developed and nurtured, he has been quite successful in locating properties suitable for Oakwood management in each of the Asia Pacific countries as well as building the Oakwood brand. In an e-interview with **Global Destinations** he focusses on the present scenario and the potential for his brand. Excerpts

You do manage some of the finest serviced apartments in India. How do you view the Indian market and your plans

for expansion and improvisation in India?

Oakwood has a good number of properties in India at the moment—right after Japan and the People's Republic of China, where we have the most number of properties under the Asia Pacific portfolio. This definitely signals our commitment to expand the brand's presence in a country that we know is one of the largest and fastest growing economies of the world.

In addition to the four properties that we currently have in Bangalore, Pune and Hyderabad, our newest property, Oakwood Hotel & Apartments Kapil Hyderabad, which is set to open in 2021, will be the second property in the rapidly-evolving city of Hyderabad. We will continue to pursue business development opportunities that will increase our footprint in India.

The concept of serviced apartment is still not as popular as it should be. Many feel the excitement in staying in a hotel and giving its address to associates is much better. Your views

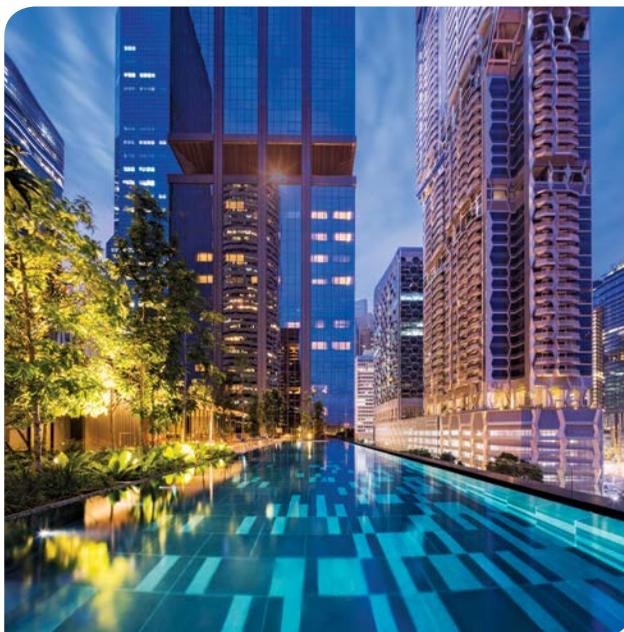
While there is a traditional notion to associate hotels with the glamour of travel, we believe that the serviced apartment industry has the strong potential to grow and develop as a mainstream alternative to hotel accommodations. The job we have at hand is to narrow the perceived gap between hotels and serviced apartments to the point where the savvy traveller will come to appreciate the space, flexibility, privacy and residential comfort offered by serviced apartments. This, complemented with the exceptional hospitality that we provide to our residential guests on a daily basis, is why we are confident that the industry will only continue to grow in importance. We are already seeing a slight shift from a more corporate-dominated demand for our properties to an increasingly growing number of leisure travellers opting to stay with us.

What type of product tiers do Oakwood have?

Whether it is travel for business or leisure, Oakwood has five distinct products across Asia Pacific, designed for different travellers with different lifestyles and needs. This includes corporate travelers on long- or short-term stays, those relocating families and seeking community-centric residences, or an increasing number of independent travellers who prefer mobility, utility and convenience. Each product represents defined levels of service and quality, primarily classified as follows:

- Oakwood Premier: luxury serviced apartments, tailored for discerning business and leisure travellers.
- Oakwood Apartments: functional apartments with modern essentials for independent travellers seeking connection and value-for-money.
- Oakwood Residence: spacious and elegant apartments set to create moments of familiarity and community for relocating families and travellers.
- Oakwood Studios: vibrant, curated spaces for global nomads and experience-centric travellers.
- Oakwood Suites: private and exclusive residences for jetsetters and senior executives.

With tech savvy youngsters, how tech-enabled are your serviced residences?



Oakwood works closely with app vendor McLaren Technologies Asia, and with properties such as Oakwood Premier OUE Singapore, we have implemented the Intelity's ICE Bedside on the Samsung tablets in guestrooms and an ICE Mobile hotel app. The app, available for download on the Apple App Store or Google Play Store, allows guests who are going to stay at the property to check out information on the property and its neighbourhood, or Singapore as a destination, helping them to plan their stay before they arrive.

A specially curated app with unique content, it allows guests convenient access to information and services such as setting wake-up calls and finding international



radio stations and weather forecast through Intelity's ICE Bedside. On the Intelity's ICE app, guests are able to find out Information about the property similar to that of a hotel compendium, Request Items from housekeeping or order In-room dining, Explore the neighbourhood, find out places to visit in Singapore (museums, bars, restaurants etc.), purchase Tours/Attraction tickets, order Food Delivery or shop for Online Groceries. The app also includes a Handy Guide which features simplified step-by-step instruction manual videos to guide guests on how to use certain in-room equipment such as the washer and dryer.

Guests will also be able to rate and provide their feedback directly to the property through the Comment Card made available on the app, allowing the team to efficiently and effectively review the positive and negative reviews from the guests.

Recognising that technology is continually evolving, we recently launched the Oakwood Showroom in Singapore—a collaboration with key partners including McLaren Technologies, as well as ASSA ABLOY, Bang & Olufsen, Electrolux, Equal Strategy, Honeywell, LaBottega, LIXIL (GROHE, INAX), Luzerne, Nespresso, Samsung and Serta. The latest products are showcased here, put together according to Oakwood's standards in hardware and fittings. This showroom is used as a test bed for new building materials and technology, allowing the continuous pursuit of quality product enhancements, as we look to increase our portfolio across the region.

Under your charge how has Oakwood expanded?

In the last 12 months, we have opened seven properties across Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia, China and Thailand. Oakwood in Asia Pacific continues to push forward with expansion plans for the region, with plans to triple the portfolio by 2023.

Upcoming openings in the next two years include Sanya, Tonglu and Foshan in China; Hanoi in Vietnam; Phnom Penh in Cambodia; Bangkok in Thailand; Jakarta and Cikarang in Indonesia; and, Yokohama in Japan. In addition to the abovementioned openings, our parent company, Mapletree Investments, will add to the expansion plans with its Mapletree-developed properties.

Seven properties across 5 countries in 12 months is pretty impressive. But how do you view the growing influence of Airbnb?

Private homeowners have been renting their places out for years. Airbnb has simply brought these separate housing options under one single platform. However, it is only with serviced apartments, can guests experience the privacy and hospitality services that

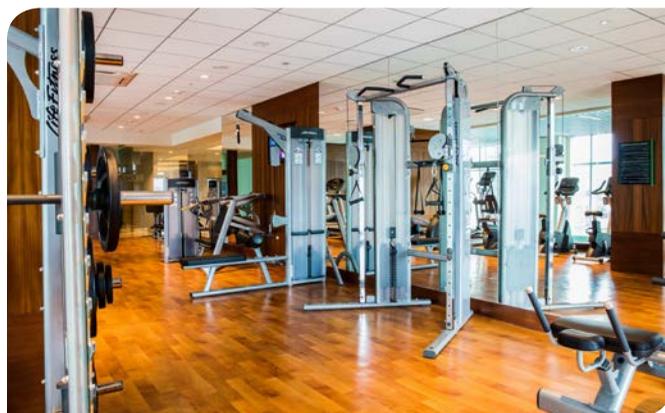
they would expect in hotels. At Oakwood properties, guests can be assured of quality amenities and reliability and do not need to worry about risks on whether the property they have booked is legally listed.

How important is the Singapore market?

Singapore has always been highly regarded as a global business hub with a strategic location that offers a stepping stone into Asia Pacific. Business-wise, we have a large number of corporate clients whose regional headquarters are based in Singapore. Having a presence in Singapore was therefore essential in bringing the Oakwood brand to life. We launched two Oakwood properties in 2017 alone – Oakwood Premier OUE Singapore and Oakwood Studios Singapore. From a traveller-demand perspective, the country continues to show strong tourist arrivals. That means there will continue to be a market and opportunity for growth in the hospitality industry.

Oakwood is well known in the Asian market but more about your presence in Europe?

Oakwood's primary business caters towards providing corporate solutions for short- and long-term business travellers globally, focusing on growth and development in gateway cities, as well as employment-based cities worldwide. We are already present in Europe and operate from a Regional Headquarters out of London. We believe Europe has huge potential for us to further expand our Oakwood brand into and are currently investing more resources to tap into this market.



What are your global expansion plans?

Oakwood is backed by Mapletree, a leading real estate firm headquartered in Singapore, with strong capabilities in real estate development, investment, capital and property management. In the long run, while Oakwood will grow as a separate business from Mapletree, the latter will continue to develop and/or acquire serviced apartments for Oakwood to manage, which will complement the other units that are managed by Oakwood.

Backed by a long-term strategy to strengthen the serviced apartment business, Oakwood will continue to set its business development plans in countries that are poised to benefit from an increase in corporate and leisure travellers' demand and preference for serviced apartments. We are also looking into the management of hybrid projects, offering hotel guestrooms and apartment units within the same development.